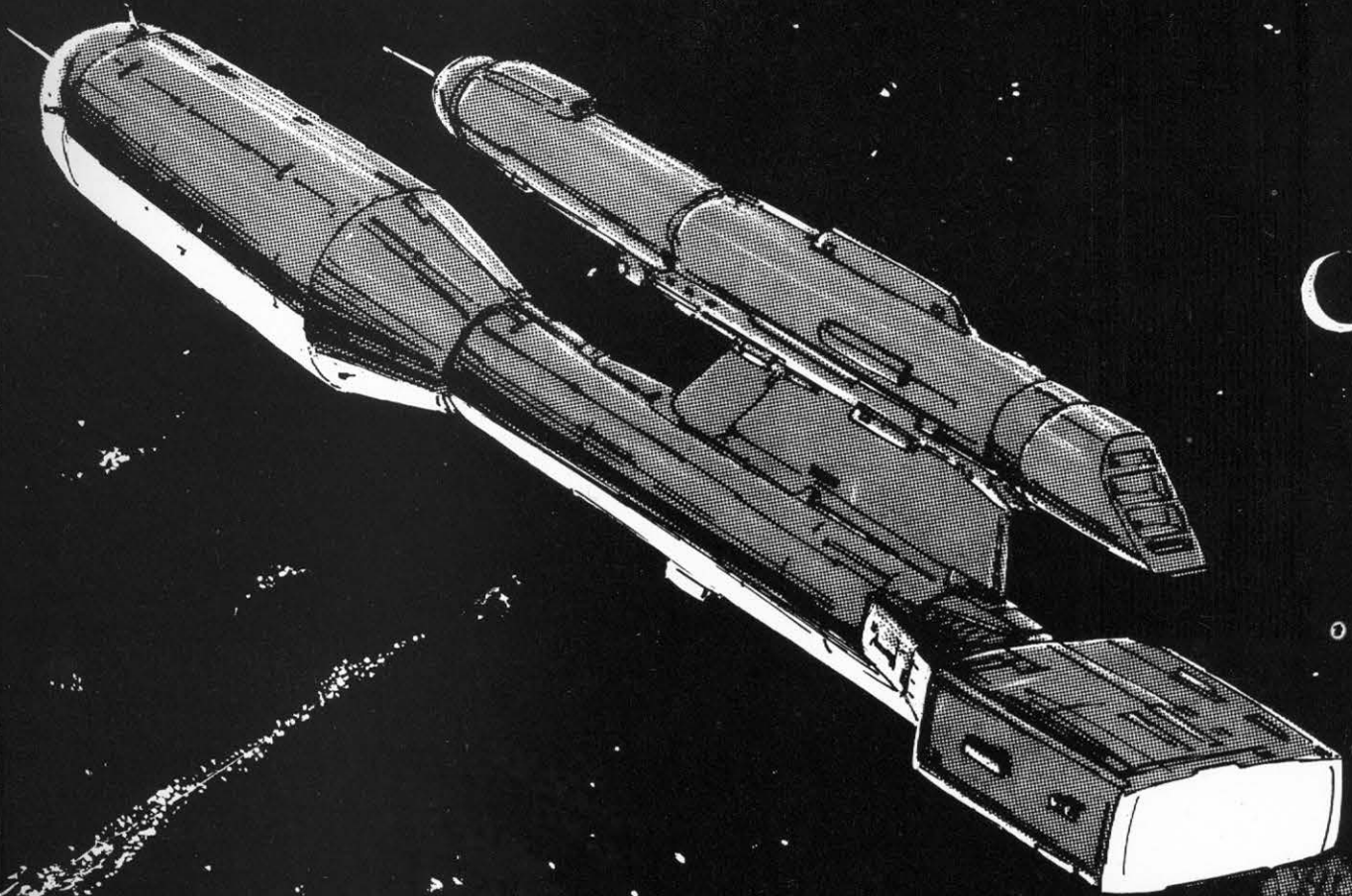


1 RAUMSCHIFF/1



Science Fiction Magazine

3 LOG	4 CREW
6 TRIVIA 1	"I have a bad feeling about this."
7 PATTERNS	Lance DuBach & Ann Wilson
24 TRIVIA 2	"Your analisys, Mr. Spock?"
25 TECHNICAL DESRIPTION	Steve Gallacci
29 DRAGON'S SONG	Jeanne McClure
30 MATTER OF HONOR (PT.1)	Ann Wilson
46 TRIVIA 3	"Deliberatly buried, uh?"
47 MURPHY'S LAW	Stephen Jaspar
49 ANSWERS	50 DEBRIEF

Editor Ann Wilson Publisher Jeff Kilian
Illustrated and assembled by Steve Gallacci

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Back cover logo for
Terran trade/technical assistance mission to Ythri

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LOG



Greetings, and welcome aboard the first flight of Raumschiff 1. Maybe I'd better explain the name before I go any further. It's German for 'spaceship' and it's called that because it's put out by a loosely-organized club of the same name, made up of people stationed over here at Ramstein, Germany.

This first issue is strictly by us, the club members. Further issues won't be; I have two stories on hand from other writers, with other artists also contributing. If you're a writer, artist, or cartoonist, feel free to join in; the club is too small to maintain the quality we all want without contributions from you. Just two things: no X-rated material, and this is a general zine. It isn't tied to any one fandom, such as Star Trek or Star Wars. I'd like to keep it that way, though I'll gladly consider items from those (or other) universes if they deal with original characters. As usual, if you want material returned, include a SASE; my address is back in the Debrief section.

Many thanks for advice and encouragement to fellow editors Nancy and Tracy Duncan of Against the Sith, Janice Sidwell of the Mos Eisley Tribune, and Pat Spath of Antithesis. Without them, I might have become discouraged several times, being a novice at this and not knowing what to expect.

Also, I must point out that everyone involved here did far more than the masthead shows, from general suggestions to typing, proofreading, making corrections, to chasing sodas and pizza--everything that goes into the making of a zine. It's been a team effort that took all of us.

Okay, on to lighter matters. Such as the Lab Mice, our resident (or non-resident) Anony-mouses. Anything that appears, for whatever reason, with no name attached can be attributed to them.

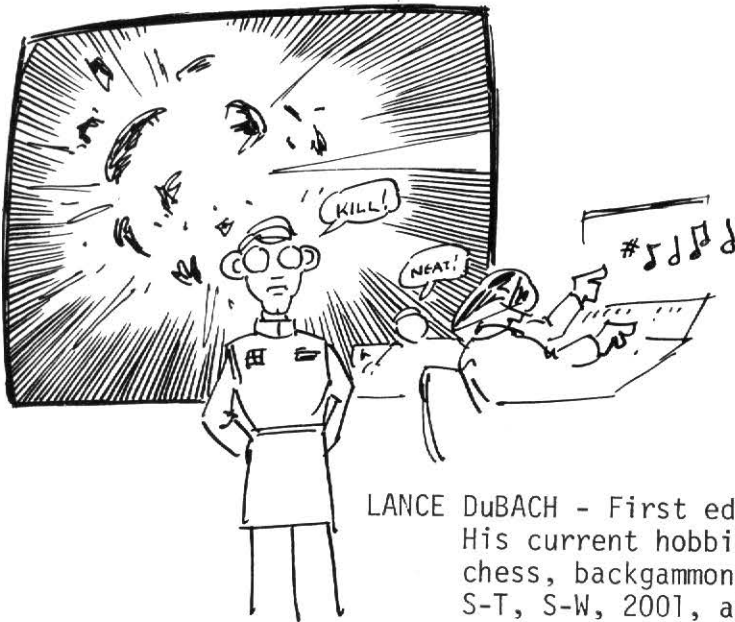
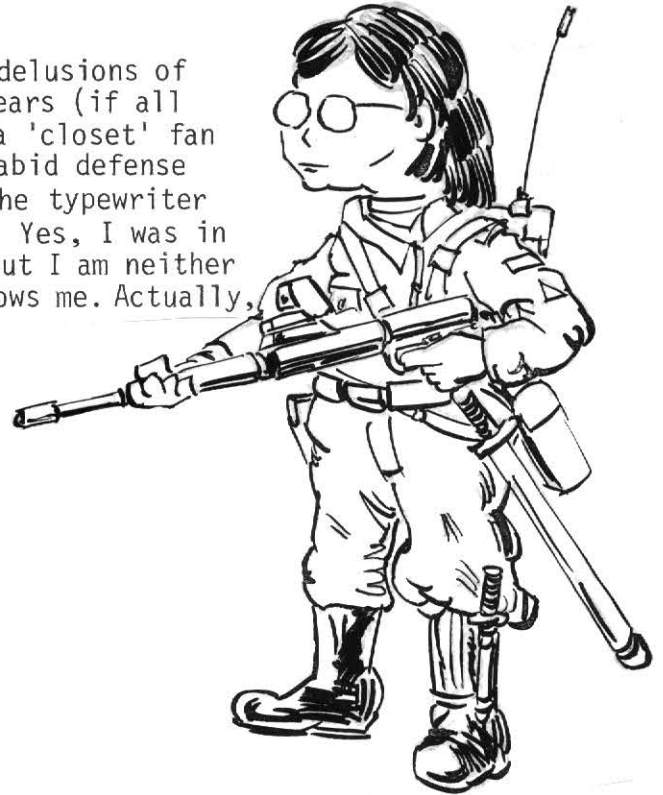
Hmm--I seem to be out of ideas. For editorials, anyway; I have plenty for stories. Hey, any of you Lab Mice care to do a guest editorial?

(Nope. Your problem. LM) Chickens! (Wrong. Mice. And if you make any more puns about us, we get revenge. LM) So be that way!

Now that that's over, the fun begins. Read, and we hope you enjoy what you find.

CREW

ANN WILSON-I'm a 35 year old housewife with delusions of writing SF, which I've been reading for 25 years (if all else fails, start your own fanzine). I was a 'closet' fan until Star Wars forced me into the open in rabid defense of Lord DARTH Vader; I've been addicted to the typewriter ever since. And I hate to do bio sketches! Yes, I was in the Marines-U.S., not Imperial Space variety-but I am neither as well armed nor as bloodthirsty as Steve shows me. Actually, I'm a very peaceable person.



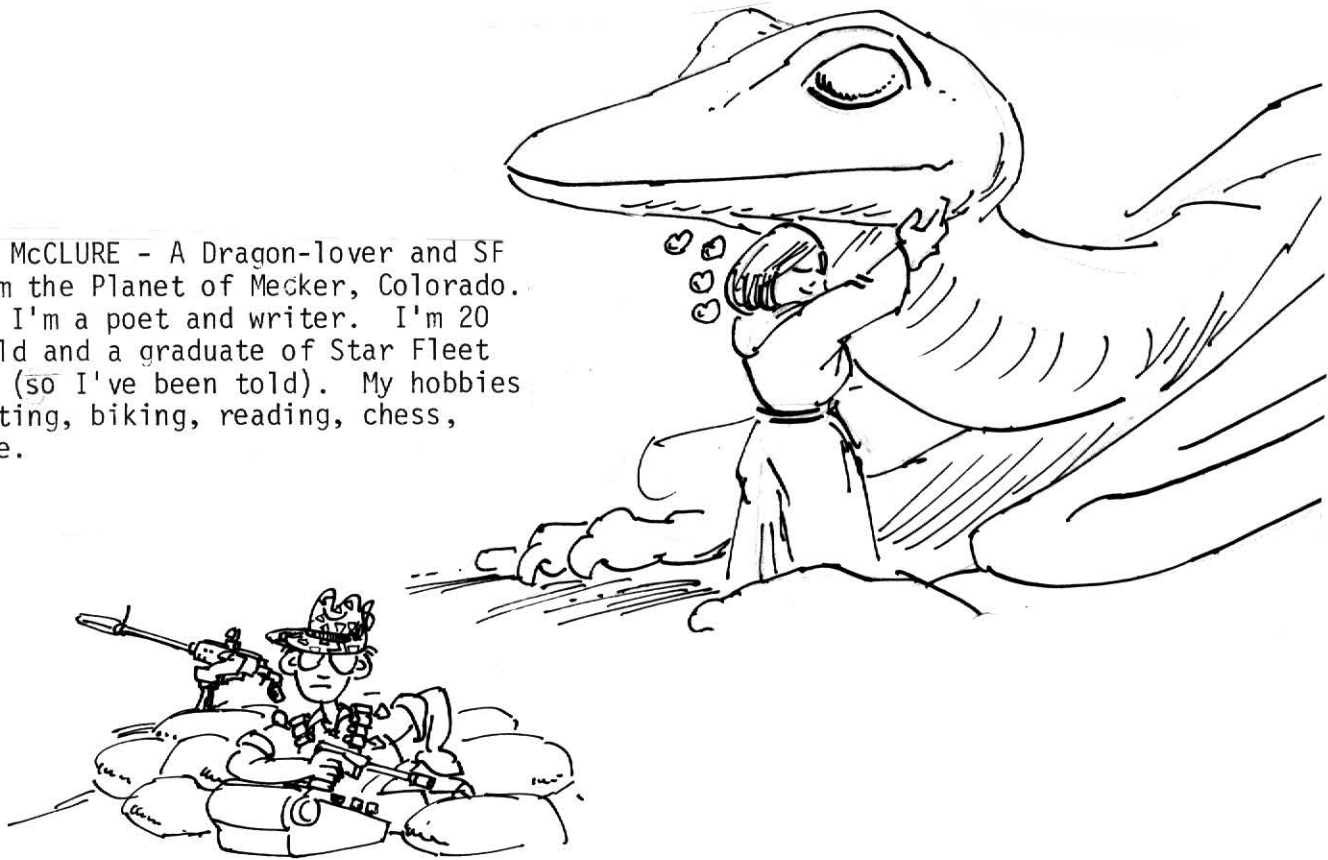
LANCE DuBACH - First editor (now deposed) and struggling author. His current hobbies are tennis, backpacking, bike-riding, chess, backgammon, Go, bowling, and writing. He's also an S-T, S-W, 2001, and Stephen King fan.

JEFF KILIAN - Publisher and business end of the organization. dedicated filmfreak and comic collector, who has serious aspirations of film directing (look out you USC grads!).



STEPHEN JASPAR- I'm a 14 year old SF and Monster fan who's devoted to ST, SW, and small fuzzy creatures. I have several hobbies, such as collecting stuffed animals, collecting stamps, and reading. (I have read SW at least 13 times, or it is 14.) I guess you could say I am an amateur writer and I make puzzles when I can't find anything else to do. Live long and prosper.

JEANNIE McCLURE - A Dragon-lover and SF fan from the Planet of Mecker, Colorado. I think I'm a poet and writer. I'm 20 years old and a graduate of Star Fleet Academy (so I've been told). My hobbies are writing, biking, reading, chess, and life.



JON WARNER - Early supporter of the club and 'zine and printed up our first flyers. Unfortunately, he's been wrenched from our midst by mission requirements. Niven, McCaffery, and Zelazny make up most of his vocabulary.



STEVE GALLACCI - Author and illustrator. Views SF with a serious and dedicated attitude and intends it as his life's work. At times called a technofreak, he does enjoy "hard" SF; he nevertheless has a special fondness for Callahan's and Bendon. He's also a model builder, sky sailer, D&D Gamer, and hopes to get some experience as a film maker. He's also looking for a choth to join.

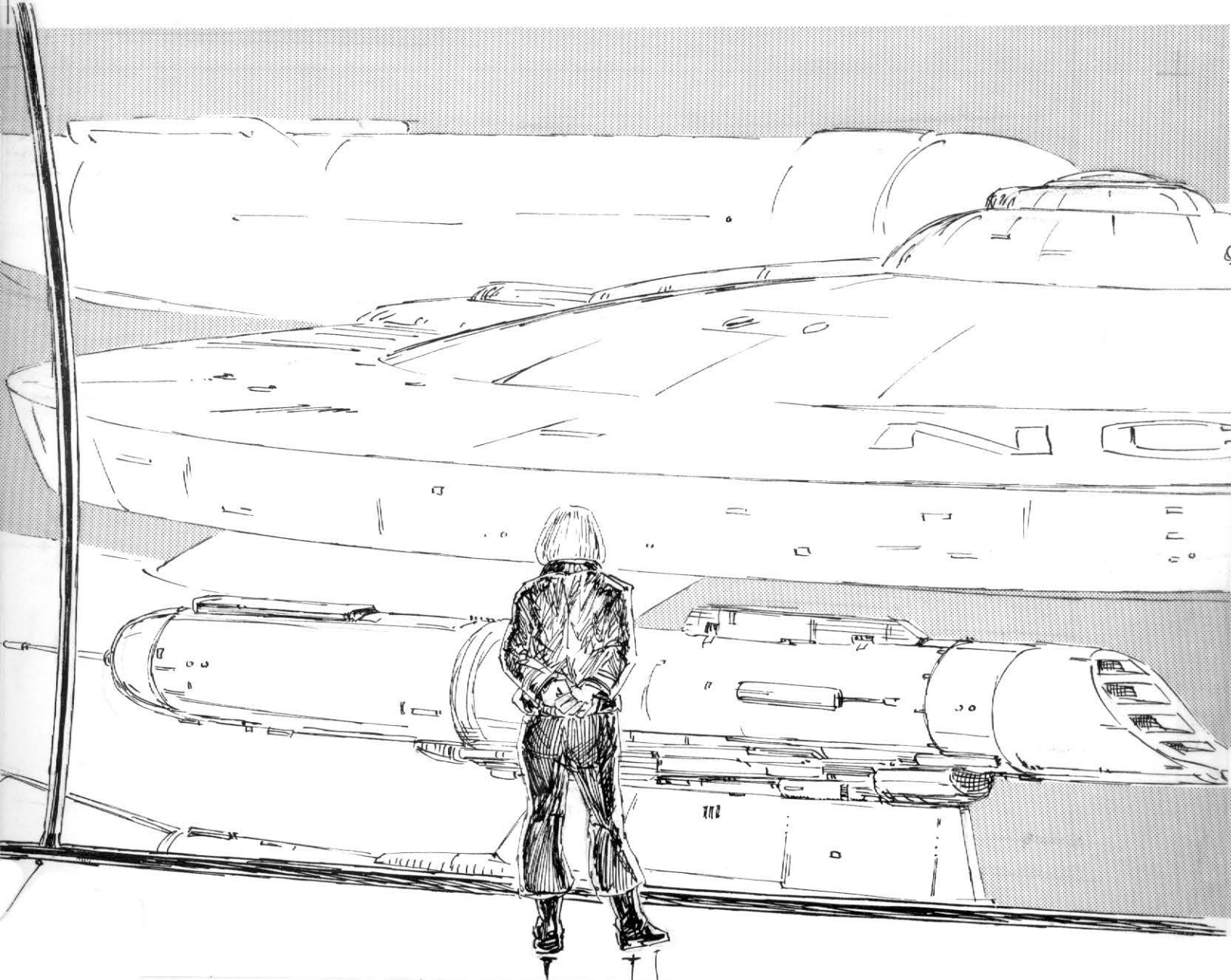
TRIVIA 1

All right, guys and gals, it's trivia quiz time. For all of you people that think you can remember some of the science fiction movie classics. This is just part one of our massive trivia quiz. Anyone who can answer all of the questions below correct will receive a pat on the back by the editor. And a free trip to the planet of your choice. (As soon as the space shuttle is working.) The first part is for all you newcomers to the scene of SF movies.

STAR WARS-easy part.

1. How old is Luke?
2. How many Rebel ships attacked the Death Star?
3. How fast will the Millennium Falcon go?
4. How did Kenobi frighten the Sandpeople away from Luke?
5. What was the number on the trash masher's pressure maintenance hatch?
6. Which Stormtrooper was not at his post?
7. Name the Imperial officer Vader choked.
8. Where was the first Rebel base?
9. What fee did Han Solo finally agree to for taking Luke and Ben to Alderaan?
10. Describe the stun effect that hit Princess Leia.





Patterns

Lance DuBach & Ann Wilson

Captain Thomas Moore sat back in his chair and contemplated his drink. After forty years of service, he was preparing for his last flight. He gazed around the small bar of Star Fleet Headquarters. For the first time, he was beginning to feel old. He could remember when all of this was just empty space. Now a full third of the huge structure had been completed. Two bays and three pods were finished, and the experts were predicting it would all be completed in only ten more years. It would continue to take maximum effort; six races, engineers from every section of the Federation, were here, working on twelve hour shifts six days a week. When they were done, Star Fleet Headquarters would be the center of the Federation and home for hordes of generals, diplomats, and traders.

Thank the stars it'll be past my time, Moore thought. Just imagine, the bureaucrats will be in seventh heaven! Moore was a simple man, or so he thought, but a simple man doesn't survive twenty years in the Earth Space Marines and the another twenty in Star Fleet, rising through the ranks from Ensign to Captain, and command of his own exploratory vessel. However, he did have simple tastes. All he wanted from life was a ship and the stars to sail between. But it wasn't over yet. That was the only thought that would comfort him.

"Why the long face, Tom? They can't have cancelled your mission, I would have heard about it."

Moore broke out of his daydreaming to look up at the middle-aged man standing next to his small table. "Oh, hello, Rich. Sit down and have a drink. No, they haven't cancelled. They don't dare. If they tried I'd tear the paper-pushers' heads off and stuff all their forms down their necks, and they know it."

"Hey, watch what you say about those 'paper-pushers'! Remember, I'm one of them now."

"Why did you ever quit line duty for a desk?" Moore asked.

Richard Hayes accepted a drink from the waitress and eyed Moore speculatively. How much of the truth could he tell his white-maned friend? All of it, he decided. They had shared too many experiences.

"Age. I saw all of these young people coming out of the Academy. Good people--sharp officers--but so damn young. I simply didn't fit in the Fleet anymore. Most of us didn't. In fact, you're about the last of the old Earth line officers left."

"Tell me about it," Moore snorted. "Even the people that give me my missions seem to be younger than I am. But you didn't hunt me down just to talk. You've had the last three weeks to do that. What do you want?"

Hayes pulled a sheet of paper from his shirt pocket and handed it to Moore. "List of new personnel assigned to your ship."

Moore read it and gave a low whistle. "A Vulcan lieutenant. Graduated third in his class at the Academy and majored in life sciences. That's a first for me; I've never had a Vulcan on board before."

Hayes nodded. "I thought you might like that. When the Academy was first started, Vulcans were among the first planets to send their best students. All of them specialize in computers or life sciences. I believe it has something to do with their philosophy. And they do make very good officers, but they're a cold race; their lives are dedicated to logic, and emotion's considered in bad taste."

"Should be interesting," Moore commented. "Even an old dog like me can learn new tricks. Still, all that really concerns me is whether or not he'll make a good officer. With that high a standing in the Academy, I don't think I need to worry." Moore glanced at his watch and rose. "Time I got back to the ship. Supplies should have been loaded by now and I'll have to sign half-dozen forms just to get back on board." He sighed. "When I get back, I'll stop by. We can open a bottle or two and get roaring drunk. How does that sound?"

"Sounds fine to me, Tom. Best of luck." The two men shook hands. Hayes watched Moore leaving the bar. When that man leaves the Fleet, he thought, it will be the end of an age. Goodbye old Earth Republic, welcome the United Federation of Planets.

Hayes didn't have to ask why Moore was going to resign his commission. Put that man behind a desk or on a planet and he'd die. No, his place was in space, between the stars. That was where he had spent most of his life and, one day, it was where he would die. It would be a fitting end.

Moore left the elevator and entered the viewing corridor. His ship, the Swan, was free floating in the repair/supply pod, connected only by a fuel rod. The matter-antimatter was pumped through that fuel rod in magnetic sections and stored in the warp engine. That sat above the main pod; both were circular in cross-section, connected by a large fin. The main pod had a larger section that contained the phaser bank, main controls, and living quarters; while the rear section containing the impulse engine, was rectangular. In case of emergencies, the warp drive could be separated from the rest of the ship.

When he'd assumed command of her, Swan was considered a fairly large ship, with a crew of almost a hundred, and she'd been among the most advanced designs of her time. Now, though, she wasn't. Dwarfed by the first two of a new class of heavy cruiser sharing this pod, Swan looked almost like a toy. He loved her, but looking up at the Constellation, he had to admit she was clumsy and old-fashioned compared to the sleek, graceful lines of the cruisers. Too bad in a way he hadn't been born forty years later; he might've had the chance to command one of these monsters. Not that he was sure he'd really want to. At least on Swan he knew all the crew and command systems. That would be impossible on the larger ships.

A little less than an hour later, Moore leaned back in his chair and breathed a silent sigh of relief. At last they were out in deep space. The formalities of paperwork and the difficult navigational maneuvering to get out of Pod II--the huge cruisers weren't the only other traffic--were over for this trip. Now Moore could honestly feel like a captain in command of his vessel, even if only for a few more months. Navigation, engineering, communications, and life systems had reported all clear, and the routine was beginning again. Now he had time for, if not more important, at least more interesting, duties.

"Mr. Peace, you have the conn. I'll be in my cabin if you need me. Doctor Adams, please have Lt. K'Pai'Ta report to my cabin in one half hour."

As they acknowledged his orders, Moore gave the command chair to his First Officer and entered the elevator. He was tired. All of the small course changes to get out of the pod and through the traffic lanes were time-consuming and tedious. One part of his mind said, you're getting old. No! He refused to accept that. Not old, it's just too large a ship, even if those cruisers are bigger. Now a one-man vessel and a few trading runs, that would be just perfect. With that old argument settled again, he left the elevator and walked down the corridor into his cabin.

He had just finished a shower and gotten into a new uniform when his door buzzer sounded. If nothing else, he's prompt, Moore noted approvingly as he glanced at the timepiece on the wall.

"Come in."

The Vulcan entered and saluted.

"Sit down, please, and relax. This is one of my more pleasurable duties; when time permits, I try to meet with all of the new crew members and get to know them better."

He watched K'Pai'Ta sit in the chair across from him and noticed that the Vulcan did not relax. A cold race, Rich had said. He would have to be careful not to be too friendly at the start. Calm Vulcan eyes, set in an impassive face, stared directly into his. If Moore didn't speak soon, the silence was going to get uncomfortable--to him.

"Frankly, lieutenant, you are the first Vulcan to serve on this ship. You are also the first I have met, and I am very curious about your race. I have heard that almost all Vulcans at the Academy major in computer or life sciences. Why?"

"We, as a race, have a great respect for logic and venerate all forms of life," K'Pai'Ta said in a deep, rich voice. "Centuries ago the planet Vulcan was almost destroyed in a cataclysmic war. Fortunately, one man appeared who showed us the errors of our ways and the one path to sanity. His name was Surak, and we respect his memory as much as humans respect their greatest leaders."

"But what does this philosophy entail?"

"First, Surak taught that emotion is our weakest point. We have successfully replaced emotion with logic. Then he taught us that all life-forms have a basic right to survival. Those are the two major points; there are 180 minor ones."

Moore was almost staring at K'Pai'Ta. A humanoid computer! That had been tried on old Earth almost a century ago and had been discarded; all of the subjects had died. Yet there was something in K'Pai'Ta's voice that suggested Surak's teachings were more to him than history or a pragmatic way to avoid disaster. He was sure the Vulcan would deny it, but he'd almost sounded mystical.

"Why did you join the Federation Academy?" Moore just managed to keep his voice at the conversational level.

"The Academy is considered one of the best schools in the Federation. It has the most diverse and best equipped life-science laboratories. Also, the Federation is the one instrument that can keep the separate planets at peace. I felt it my duty to become a part of that instrument. In addition, I now have an opportunity to study life-forms on previously unexplored planets. That is an opportunity I would not have had had I remained on Vulcan."

"Hmm, yes, I see. Well, do you play chess?" K'Pai'Ta nodded and Moore pulled out the chess board. "We have time for just one game."

Moore started with a traditional opening and was mated on the sixth move. "A short game, sir?" Moore scowled and looked at the Vulcan's face. He could have sworn that a flash of amusement had passed through those eyes. "Yes, very well, lieutenant. You are now commanded to appear at my cabin every other shift to play chess with me." K'Pai'Ta nodded. "You may return to your section." Moore thought that it would be very pleasant to play with someone who could beat him as well as he could beat Clarke.

But Moore was also fascinated with the Vulcan. He was outwardly as cold and emotionless as Rich had hinted, but Moore was a trained and experienced judge of men. He sensed that behind that Vulcan mask, K'Pai'Ta loved the nature he only spoke of studying, and his concern for peace seemed as idealistic as logical. Moore had the feeling that if he could open the Vulcan's mind he would find a set of Chinese puzzle boxes. Open one and you find another and another and another, and yet never touch the core. Yes, he would definitely keep an eye on that one. There was no doubting the man's loyalty, but Moore was curious exactly what went on behind that impassive face.

Well, all of that could wait for awhile. He had a briefing to run...

The briefing room was silent for the moment. Each of the officers was studying, on an individual viewscreen built into the circular briefing table, the programmed-mission tape. System diagrams, remote probe reports, any hard data available that might help them, appeared. Each officer scanned the entire tape, but concentrated on data pertinent to his own field of study.

Finally, Moore broke the silence. "Gentlemen, our current mission is a simple one and should be a milk run. We are to explore these three systems, doing general mapping and cataloging. What Star Fleet is looking for, basically, are uninhabited planets suitable for colonization. Any questions?"

He looked up from the viewing screen and eyed his officers expectantly. Lt. Cdr. Braxton Peace, First Officer; Dr. Charles Adams, ship's surgeon; Lt. Nancy Clarke, Chief Engineer, and K'Pai'Ta of Life Sciences also looked up from their consoles.

Cdr. Peace was the first to speak. "No signs of life at all?"

"None, but the probe only checked for evidence of space travel--ion trails and such. The rest is up to us."

Doctor Adams asked, "How many ships are on this project?"

"Twenty," Moore replied. "Each ship has three systems to explore, just as we do. This will be an expanding project. Explore and settle, more exploring and more settling. Now that all of the Federation's basic policies have been decided, we can concentrate on discovering inhabitable systems to help take the pressure off the over-populated planets."

All the officers nodded. During the establishment of the Federation, none of the signing parties had dared to claim any new planets for fear others might object violently, leading to the war all were trying to avoid. Even after the Federation was founded, there was a waiting period to see if it would work. Now, some planets were seriously over-populated and anxious to relieve the pressure. Discovery of usable planets might not help much physically at first, but it would be of immense psychological value.

"Are there any more questions?" Moore asked. There was no response, so he nodded. "Very well, then return to your sections and brief your people."

Two weeks out:

Nancy Clarke rang the cabin buzzer and entered Moore's cabin with an easy familiarity. "Hello, anyone home?"

Moore emerged from the bathroom with shaving cream still on his face. "Hello, Clarke; what can I do for you?" He wiped the last of the cream off and tossed the towel accurately into a disposer.

"Just stopped by to tell you I won't be able to make our racquetball game tomorrow. One of the new troops tried to do a repair job on the strut and I had to redo it. So tomorrow I'm starting lessons on how to take one part out and put a replacement in."

Moore shook his head. "God help Star Fleet! At least the Academy's grads are competent. Do you have time for a quick game?" He gestured at the chess board. She nodded.

Three hours and ten games later, Moore was totaling up the score. "Let's see, at a hundred credits a game, you now owe me the grand sum of 3,500 credits. Can I get that in cash, or in kind?"

Nancy had to laugh. "If we keep this up, I'll be working for you for the next hundred years, on Fleet pay. The problem is that you've had so many years of experience. I can't hope to catch up."

"That's what I'm counting on."

Nancy's expression suddenly grew serious. "Tom, what are you going to do after you retire?"

Moore looked at her in surprise. It was the first time she had ever asked that question. "You know I refused that promotion Star Fleet offered because I'd be no damn good behind a desk. I'll keep busy. I have just enough money saved up to buy a second-hand trader; I can make a few trading runs. And I've had some offers from private industries to explore for them. I'd be mostly checking asteroids for minerals; they need old star dogs like me because of our experience."

His expression grew somber. "I hadn't thought too much about retiring because I never really thought I'd live this long. When I was in the old Earth fleet, it was a challenge just to come back from each mission in one piece. Even in the early days of the Federation, there was some excitement. There was the threat of war, and there were a few real incidents. Those made life interesting for a while. Now the whole damn universe is being buried under forms and regulations and...Federation paper-pushers!"

Nancy stared at him in amazement, then gave a low whistle. "You must have had that in you for a long time. Glad to get it out?" He nodded, and she went on, "Good. I wish I could agree with you, but I can't. The Federation has brought peace and I, for one, am happy to see it. All I want is to be able to work on my engines and read about all the new developments. After all, I'm assigned to this ship for ten years and I don't think they'll let me transfer out before then."

Moore looked at the engineer for a long moment. "You're one of the best engineers in the Fleet; you could easily have gotten a berth on one of the new cruisers. Have you ever regretted being assigned here for so long?"

My God, he really is down today, Nancy thought. How to bring him out of it? "No, except of course for the wolf of a captain here, who never delivers on what he promises."

Moore started to growl. "Better get out of here, lady, before I tan your hide. Remember, people think you're a lady."

Nancy laughed, relieved. That sounded better. She got up and walked to the door, turned smoothly, and gave a mock salute. "Yes, sir, but all I can say is, promises, promises."

She got a good-natured growl in return and, laughing, left.

Three weeks out:

"Sensors report no sign of intelligent life. Freely translated, that means no sign of any artifacts. Remember, though, that some types of intelligence need no artifacts. Be careful."

Moore glanced around the briefing table at the landing team's officers. Lieutenants K'Pai'Ta and Smith looked at him expectantly. Or at least Smith did, K'Pai'Ta was as expressionless as ever. Damn, Moore thought, you can't ever tell what he's thinking.

"If you will look at the monitor, you will notice this system has four minor planets and one gas giant. Number three is Class M, atmosphere almost identical to Earth's. Most of it is desert, with only two major seas and five areas of vegetation. Those five areas seem to be regularly spaced around the planet. Part of your job will be to find out why.

"If you get into any kind of trouble, contact the ship immediately. Remember, you are not authorized to use your phasers unless you are under direct attack.

"Are there any questions?" There were none. "That's all, then, The landing craft is waiting."

The landing craft, looking like a large beetle, circled one of the vegetated areas twice before landing in the middle of the grassy field. Lt. K'Pai'Ta got out first, looked around, then flipped open his communicator and called the Swan. "We have landed in an open field surrounded by large hills one-half kilometer away. Everything is quiet. We will operate under normal procedures."

"Acknowledged. Carry on." Moore's voice came from the device.

K'Pai'Ta turned to the rest of the landing party, now gathered outside their craft. "Spread out in twos, gathering any information you can, and report back in three hours. Then we will set up camp and report in." He pointed to one of the crewmen. "Ensign, come with me."

The group separated, K'Pai'Ta and the Ensign setting out for one of the nearby hills. They intrigued him. Although there was no sign of intelligent life, the hills were evenly spaced around the area of vegetation, placed so perfectly that it seemed impossible for it to be a natural formation.

It wasn't a long walk, and as they approached the hill that was their goal, K'Pai'Ta observed that it was covered with some kind of moss. He bent to study it more closely. Any form of life was interesting, of course, but this was his first new discovery. His Vulcan teachers would have disapproved, but K'Pai'Ta couldn't completely repress a flash of excitement at the idea. Then a shout from the Ensign attracted his attention.

He had found a cave--in fact, several. The entire hill appeared to be honeycombed. K'Pai'Ta joined him, and they entered one, finding the moss had grown even inside, covering the interior of the cave to a depth of six to eight centimeters.

In the darkened interior, the moss was glowing with a faint bluish light. K'Pai'Ta was fascinated. Not only was the moss glowing visibly, his tricorder revealed it was also emitting light in the ultraviolet and infrared spectra. He held his hand close to the moss but could feel no heat, even though it was registering on the tricorder. That was intriguing indeed.

Moore was alerted to the presence of an alien vessel exactly one minute before it attacked. At its angle of approach, it looked somewhat like a flattened teardrop with warp drive pods held away from the main body by what looked like wings. That resemblance was heightened by the bird-like designs painted on the hull. It gave Moore the impression of a hawk, swooping at his Swan.

He was trying to establish contact with the ship when it opened fire, the first salvo slamming against Swan's deflectors.

"Navigator, break orbit. Get us out of here, somewhere where we can maneuver."

As the navigator hastened to obey, Nancy turned from her console. "What about the landing party?"

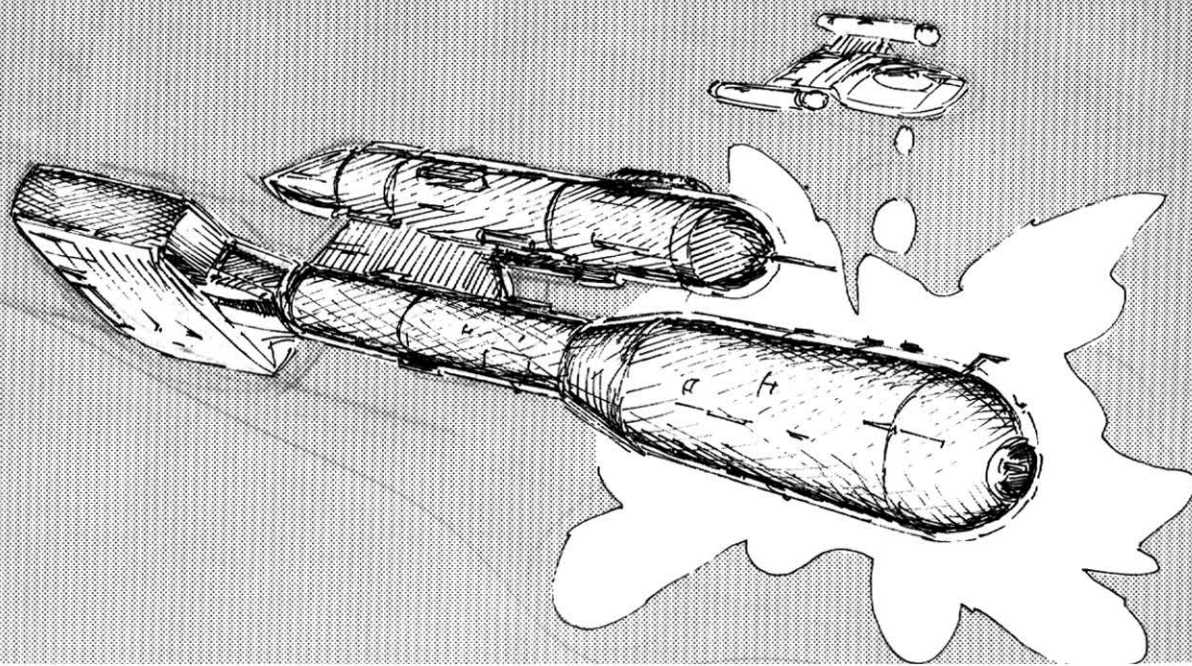
"With luck, these characters won't know we have people on the planet. Right now we don't have time to retrieve them."

The Swan left the system, followed closely by the alien vessel. When Moore felt like he had enough room he ordered, "Hard about. Let's get him off our tail and do some attacking ourselves."

The helmsman executed the maneuver perfectly, bringing them around in a tight circle that should have put them on the alien's tail--except the enemy ship simply wasn't there. Moore turned to his First Officer. "Where is he?"

Peace looked like he didn't believe the report he was making. "Sensors indicate that as soon as we initiated that turn, he accelerated to Warp Six, and is now coming toward us."

Moore snapped quick orders. "Helmsman, ready phaser banks. Prepare to fire."



The reply was prompt. "Phasers ready, sir."

"Lock onto that ship and fire."

This was Moore's element. Action at last, after so many years! The danger was real, but Moore couldn't suppress a certain amount of savage joy as the Swan's phasers blazed.

Then the small ship was rocked by an explosion. The main viewscreen went blank for a second as the alien's fire flared against the front shields.

"We missed, sir, she was too quick."

"Get ready for her next pass, Helmsman. Lock on."

"Locked on and ready, sir."

"Fire."

The result was the same, a clean miss.

Moore looked at the Helmsman angrily. "What's wrong?"

"She's just too fast for the computer to track, sir. As soon as we fire, they dodge and fire back."

Nancy looked up from her engineering readouts. "Captain, our shields have been badly weakened. A few more passes and they will fail completely."

Another explosion rocked the ship, and a third.

"They're playing with us, sir, coming in from all angles, putting stress on all of our shields."

Damn, Moore thought. They're faster, better armed than we are. Why play games? Then he realized the truth. "They're not playing, Helmsman. They're testing us, finding out what the Federation is capable of. We need time to think; we have to get word of this back."

He turned to Nancy. "Clarke, get ready to separate the warp pod from the main hull. Fill the engine section with sensory emitting equipment. But before you do that, bring some of the antimatter aboard this section. Go!"

As Nancy left the bridge, he turned to his First Officer. "Prepare a pod containing all the information the computers have on the aliens along with the ship's log. At my command, release the pod."

The Swan shuddered under the impact of a fourth hit.

"Lieutenant, how long before the shields fail?"

"Number Three will fail at the next pass, sir. One through Four will drop soon after."

"As soon as the warp engine has been disengaged, turn off all power in this section. If they have any sensing gear aimed at us, we want them to think the warp drive is the main part and we're the discard." Moore hit the communcator button on his command chair. "Clarke, are you ready?"

"Two more minutes, sir."

Those were slow minutes, but finally the message came. "Ready, sir."

"Good. Helmsman, at my command, put all the speed you can get out of her." He paused, watching the viewscreen until the enemy ship seemed to be as far away as it was going to get. "Now!"

The hum of the warp drive filled the ship, deepening as the helmsman slowly counted off their speed.

"Warp three...Warp four...Warp five."

Another explosion.

"Number Three shield is down."

"Warp six."

"It can't be!"

"She can't take much more."

"Release the message pod. Now, Clarke, disengage! Shut down all systems."

Moore's world disintegrated into darkness as the impulse engines drove them, angling the Swan's main section away from the warp engine's course.

K'Pai'Ta, absorbed in his study of the strange, glowing moss, didn't hear the approach of the alien aircraft. The first hint he had of anything wrong was the sound of an explosion.

He and the Ensign raced to the entrance of the cave. The sight of their shuttlecraft, now a smoking wreck, greeted their eyes. The Ensign had started to run down the slope when K'Pai'Ta's shouted command stopped him. He turned and saw K'Pai'ta crouched just inside the cave entrance, his phaser out. The Ensign turned to look where K'Pai'Ta was aiming and saw the alien craft.

It was passing slowly overhead, delta wings spread, looking for survivors. K'Pai'Ta aimed carefully and fired. The phaser beam touched one of the delta wings. The alien ship began to dive, recovered, and curved toward the cave. The Ensign's cry of triumph turned to one of alarm as he dove for cover.

The ship fired, hitting the side of the cave entrance. The force of the explosion threw K'Pai'Ta against the far wall, knocking him unconscious.

He thought he was awake when he heard a giggling sound. "Shush, we must be quiet., they may be able to hear us."

K'Pai'Ta's mind made a quick inventory of his body. The right side of his face and body were bleeding from surface wounds, but no major organs seemed to be damaged. He could vaguely feel someone trying to bandage him, so he let his mind start to enter the Vulcan healing trance. He was rudely interrupted by a voice in his mind--speaking.

"We should watch what they are doing now. Apparently they are in disrepair and are trying to repair themselves."

"Who are you?" K'Pai'Ta thought.

"They can hear us. Should we speak to them? Can they damage us like the others? Can we trust them? Should we speak? Let's; we must speak to find out if they will be hurt. We wonder if we can..."

"Please cease. You are filling my mind with nonsense. Who are you?"

"Who are we? We are the Thorigians. We surround you and this planet. Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

"I am part of an exploring team. We were also attacked by those you call the others. What happened to the attacking ship?"

"Do you mean the flying thing that fired something at us? They are gone now. We reflected a beam back at them and they disappeared. Perhaps they didn't like us. We didn't like what they did to us. We hurt, so we hurt them. You haven't come to hurt us, have you? What do you mean by 'I'? What is 'I'? Where did you come from? Why are you..."

"Please stop. No, we are not here to harm you. We come from the lights in the sky and we are only here to explore, to learn about your world. We want to help you, but we need your help also. Will you help us?"

"They need our help? How can we help them? Should we trust them? Yes, let's. If they hurt us we can hurt them. Very well. We will do what we can."

K'Pai'Ta actually woke up then. He was lying against the side of the cave. A crewman was kneeling beside him, just finishing the task of bandaging him.

"Don't try to move, sir. Lieutenant Smith was killed in the explosion and I don't know how badly you're hurt."

"I want a full report, Ensign." K'Pai'Ta's Vulcan training helped him disregard the pain and concentrate on central matters.

"We don't know how you did it, sir, but you got the alien ship."

"Specify."

"You mean you didn't know? A beam came out of the cave just after they fired. The ship just disappeared. When we got to the cave we found you here, unconscious. You've been out for an hour. The crewman with you was killed; apparently when the alien ship fired at the cave a rock ricocheted and took his head off. We buried him."

The voice entered K'Pai'Ta's mind again. "What are you doing?"

"I am communicating with another one of us."

"They tickle!"

"Do you mind?"

"No, the experience is fun. Please go on!"

The Ensign looked at K'Pai'Ta questioningly. "Are you all right, sir?"

"I am quite all right. I seem to have found an intelligent life form on this planet. The moss in this cave has a hive-type mind. I am able to communicate with it telepathically. Apparently when the alien craft fired at the cave, this creature replied in kind. We must be very careful not to harm it in any way."

The Ensign looked at him in shock and amazement. "Aye, aye, sir," he said with great feeling.

"Wake up, sir." Someone was slapping his face gently, and Moore wished he would go away. Everything was so peaceful and calm when no one was bothering him. Then with a rush, the events just past hit him. He tried to sit up.

"Easy, sir, easy. You took quite a blow."

Moore ignored the advice and struggled to a sitting position. "What happened?"

Peace was kneeling next to him. "It worked perfectly. The alien ship is following the warp engine. It should catch up and destroy it in a half-hour. The message pod was ignored. We have some breathing space."

"Good. Assemble all officers in the briefing room. We're going to have to act fast."

Within five minutes Moore was standing at one end of a very crowded briefing room. The people there were standing heel to toe, giving him respectful breathing room.

"We have been attacked without warning by an alien vessel which not only outguns us but has a attacking speed of Warp six. We can't defend ourselves, but we must make sure that ship doesn't find the coordinates of Star Fleet Headquarters. We have sent a message pod out and we don't want the aliens to follow her home. The interstellar war we have always feared is now a reality. We must make sure that the first blow is a positive one. Clarke, can we rig a bomb using the antimatter you salvaged and drop it off in that ship's path?"

Nancy frowned. "We could, but at the speed that thing travels, there's no guarantee we'll hit it. And there's no way we could avoid the blast ourselves with only impulse engines."

"How large will the blast be?"

Nancy swiftly checked with the computer. "With that amount of antimatter, about 20,000 kilometers radius."

"If we shut down all systems, will we be able to fire on her? She should think we are dead."

"Only if her shields are down. And we have only enough power for one salvo. I can give you shields or phasers, but not both."

"Very well, then." Moore looked at the group in front of him. They were a good crew. Most had been with him for a long time, they were his family. This was going to be hard. "In approximately twenty minutes the alien vessel will be returning. At that time we will engage the enemy on impulse engines, putting all our power in the forward shields. When we are certain they are within range, Clarke will release the stasis field around the antimatter. Are there any questions?"

There were none, and though several of his people had gone pale, there were no protests, either. Moore's pride in them increased. They knew as well as he did there was no alternative. An enemy that attacked as this one had, unprovoked and with no warning, had to be stopped no matter what the cost. "Very well, return to your posts."

Minutes later Moore was in his command chair, thinking. Life had been good to him. Enough for two or three people, really; Moore didn't pity himself. He did feel sorry for the younger members of the crew. Life for them had been short. With luck, their deaths would not be in vain. The ship hummed around him, prepared for their last, great effort. The minutes passed all too quickly.

"Ship on the scanner, sir."

"Forward on impulse." He spoke into the communicator. "Prepare to release the stasis field, Clarke."

"They seem to be hovering. Checking us out."

Moore leaned forward. "Are they within phaser range?"

"Negative, sir. And they are just out of range of the blast."

Damn it, Moore thought. A few more minutes would just make this harder. "Blink our lights, Helmsman. Let them know that we are here. The last great act of defiance."

The helmsman smiled. "Yes, sir!"

Moore watched as the alien ship grew to fill the viewscreen. "Careful, careful...wait till the bastard's close enough." Moore waited even though the ship was within blast range. Life was sweet.

"She's speeding up, sir...attacking!"

"Now, Nancy!"

A new nova appeared in the heavens and then began to fade...

The main shelter was constructed from fragments of the landing craft, crudely straightened, then welded by low-power phaser fire. It wasn't much, but it was protection and a place to store what supplies they had been able to salvage. It was near the cave where K'Pai'Ta had first met the Thorigians.

Not only was K'Pai'Ta the only surviving officer, thus the commander, he was also the only member of the group who could communicate with the moss-like aliens. That ability was vital; the Thorigians were literally keeping them alive. He wondered why, but was thankful for their aid. If they wanted him to spend time with them, as they did, it was his duty to do so.

It had been four months since they had been attacked when K'Pai'Ta entered the cave for what would be the last time. He sat down in the center of the cave and used the Vulcan meditation techniques to clear his mind. Quickly the outside world vanished. When the feeling of the floor under him faded and K'Pai'Ta knew only the familiarity of his own mind, he sent out an inquiry. The force that seized his consciousness could not be the Thorigians! In a moment of panic he tried to pull his mind free and was met with a reeling pain. That faded into a sense of blankness and calm. For the first time K'Pai'Ta was at peace.



"K'Pai'Ta, we regret any pain you have felt. However time is short and we have much to do. Your mind is strong but adjustments must be made.

"A squadron of Federation ships have just entered this system. They have received the message we have been sending and will be sending a surface craft to pick up the survivors. They are suspicious of a trap and are coming well-armed. This is a good thing; no longer will the Federation be so trusting. Soon there will be an interstellar war and there must not be a clear winner. That is important to us.

"However, we must look past this war and to the future. Preparations have already been made for the peace treaty; now we must prepare you.

"We are the Thorigians, do not fear. We wanted you to believe we were immature so we could study your potential. We are not young; we are as old as time itself. When your ancestors were still fighting in barbaric wars, we were old. Once we had bodies but we developed our minds so we could reach out to the stars. But after years of exploring we grew bored. Now we are the greatest game player in the Universe. You and the Federation will be our pieces. We destroyed the alien craft because we could not afford to have you destroyed. You have too much potential.

"Your Federation is too weak to win in the upcoming war. We must alter the odds.

"K'Pai'Ta, you are an idealist lost in the teachings of Surak. However, when crewmen died under your command you felt no pain, no sorrow. Your Vulcan training did not allow you to. This is a failing Surak never realized. It must be corrected."

K'Pai'Ta had never felt such sensations before in his life. He was an animal with a fresh kill in his mouth; he was tasting blood and enjoying it. He felt the tender touch of a lover, his body covered with sweat, and he felt content. He felt himself die under an enemy's blade and he felt hate, sorrow, and a savage need for revenge. These and a thousand more, different emotions ran through his mind. Some were familiar, some alien. But all gave him knowledge.

Slowly his Vulcan training and this new found knowledge touched, intertwined and intermingled, and then were mated. He understood. He understood not only the reasons for intelligent action; he also understood the emotional reaction beneath. He was no longer Vulcan; he was something else.

"When we release you, you will remember nothing. However, when you think of you first command in the future, you will feel a blackness, a depression at the thought of the men who died. Your Vulcan training has been reestablished for the most part. We have made some modifications. Your body has been repaired except for your face. Whenever you see yourself in the mirror you will remember dead men and the thing that can not be changed. You know your destiny and what must be done.

"We have finished. Your human companions have been changed also. We are pleased with the results. You have all the tools necessary to survive. The rest is fate. If you live, you will change the course of the Federation. We will watch you and advise. Arise, K'Pai'Ta, and go. Live long and prosper."

He left the cave, remembering only that the Thorigians had told him of a Federation ship, and of their suspicion. He had to prepare for its landing. It wouldn't do to be destroyed by their rescuers. It was too bad the Thorigians preferred not to become involved; with their abilities, they would be a definite asset to the Federation.

Still, he had to respect their desires. They had kept the castaways alive. And no one could be forced to fight; especially the Thorigians. Enough, K'Pai'Ta told himself. There is little time to prepare.

By the time the Federation landing craft passed overhead, K'Pai'Ta and his men were grouped away from their crude shelter, no weapons in sight. K'Pai'Ta had his own hands raised, empty.

The small atmosphere ship landed on the second pass, all its weapons trained on the six survivors. The hatch slid open and a ramp extended. K'Pai'Ta was not surprised when the first man out was a red-shirted Security man, his phaser aimed steadily at the Vulcan.

K'Pai'Ta endured the necessary search silently; finally the Security team was done, and called an all-clear to the ship. The officer who came out next had a look of disbelief on his face.

That was understandable, K'Pai'Ta thought. Thanks to the Thorigians, even their uniforms were spotless despite the four months of constant wear. His own had somehow been repaired, and all the survivors could easily have passed inspection.

There were no formalities. As soon as the rescue party had satisfied itself that there were no medical problems, they were hustled aboard the landing craft and taken to the Constellation.

Commander Stewart was sitting in the briefing room discussing the condition of the survivors with his chief medical officer, Dr. Blaine.

"So what's wrong with them? You've had two days to examine every part of their bodies, and you still haven't released them. What's holding you up?"

"Commander, that's just it! There isn't one damn thing wrong with them. Every survivor is in perfect health, and I can't explain why. The only visible damage is to K'Pai'Ta's face, when from their stories his entire side should be a mass of scars. They can't explain it, and neither can I--or why he refuses cosmetic surgery. They only say that the Thorigians were responsible for their survival."

"I know that part," Stewart interrupted. "But we've combed the planet with every sensor we have, we can't find any traces of intelligent life at all. If someone or something did help them, it's gone now." He frowned. "Do you think it might have been the aliens? Maybe they were captured, turned into spies."

"Impossible. All the psych tests come out normal. All of them saw the alien craft kill their companions and all of the humans want revenge. The Vulcan sees the alien as a threat to the Federation that must be stopped. I've been inside their heads with every test modern medicine has been able to devise. No, they can't be spies."

"All right. Then you might as well release them. As much as I hate to, just file a report. Someone can worry about it after the war..."

K'Pai'Ta, like the other survivors, had been assigned quarters aboard the Constellation after being released from sick bay. He was in them now, meditating. Anyone entering would have seen a Vulcan sitting in a chair, appearing to study a chess problem with unnatural intensity. It wouldn't have distracted K'Pai'Ta; he would take no more note of an observer than he did of his other surroundings. He was too deep in thought, trying to integrate a wide variety of apparently unrelated facts into a logical whole.

Fact--Mankind was the only race in the Federation with a true wanderlust; all the other races were more interested in their own systems and affairs. Even Vulcans endured Star Fleet because of the superior facilities. Most would never leave Star Fleet Headquarters.

Fact--The majority of races, nevertheless, still had an instinctive desire for war to gain materials when they were unable to trade.

Fact--The Swan affair had been a fiasco. If it had not been for the courage of her captain and crew, the aliens would still have an advantage. Now they no longer had surprise on their side.

Fact--The use of old Earth Fleet officers in command was a grave tactical mistake. They were simply too old for warfare, and their methods of combat were unsuitable.

Fact--Cadets at the Academy were being taught those methods, along with other outdated information.

Fact--The cadets were not being taught what K'Pai'Ta now knew was the most important lesson, how to survive, react, and command under the gravest of emergency situations.

These facts and more marshaled themselves in K'Pai'Ta's brain, leading him to one inevitable conclusion. After the war, if he survived, he would have to request a transfer to the Academy. Promotions were fast in war; by that time he would have enough rank to begin carrying out the changes he knew were needed. It was entirely possible that, to make all the necessary changes, he would have to become commander of the Academy.

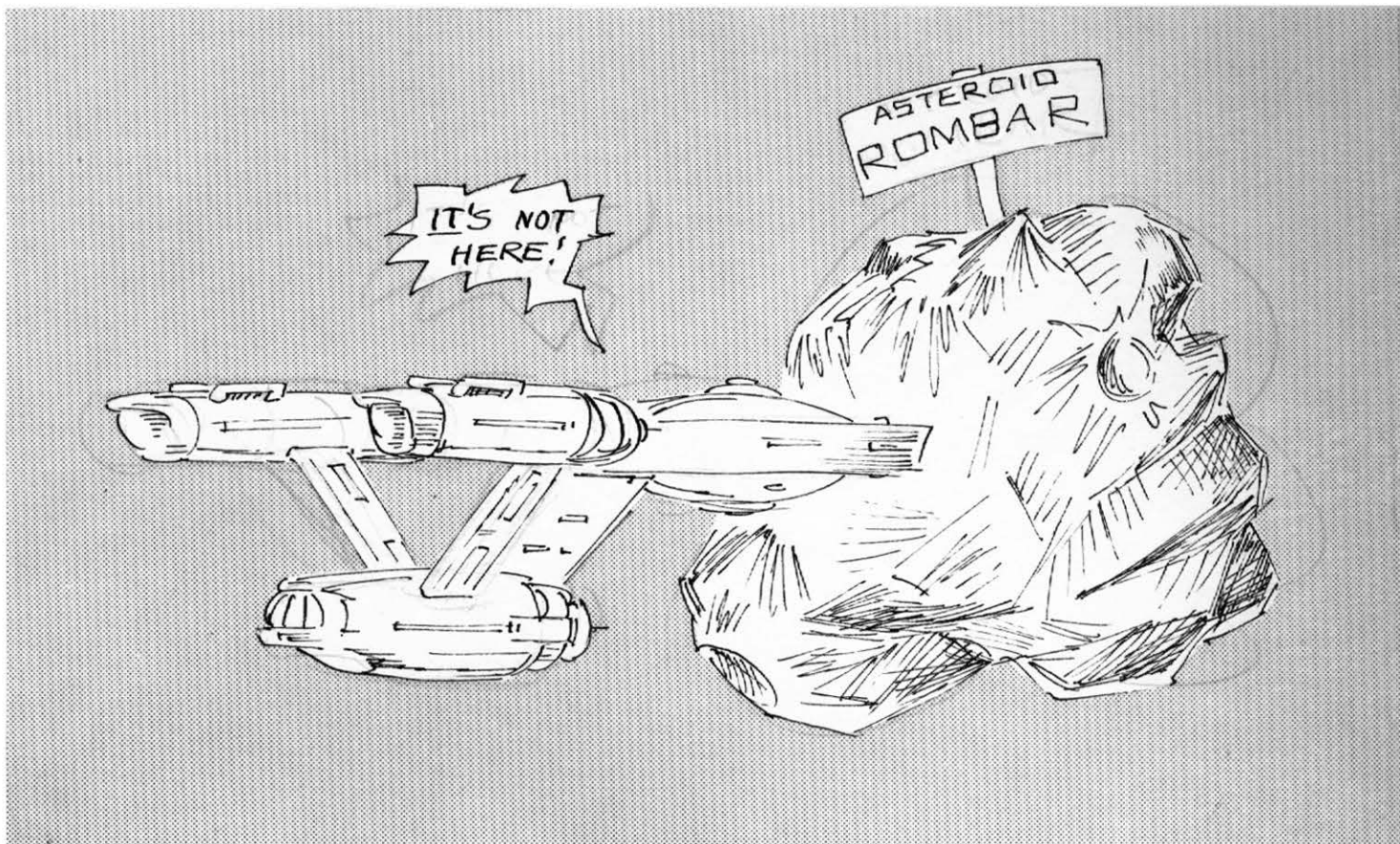
He accepted the conclusion as he accepted other facts in life. He would do it because it needed to be done. That settled his attention turned outward and he began studying the chess problem laid out before him.

The Thorigians were pleased. They recognized the problem as analogous to the one they had just solved, using K'Pai'Ta and the other survivors as key pieces. They approved.

These five humans and a Vulcan would be key pieces indeed. One would develop what would be known as a Transporter, enabling future explorers to be able to beam from ship to ship, or ship to planet. Still another would develop sensors to such a fine degree that they could not only sense life-forms, but exactly what type. One would develop a way to communicate with the aliens, discover they were called Romulans, and be instrumental in negotiating the peace treaty. The final two would invent the photon torpedo.

And so it would go on. New inventions, exciting discoveries, training methods that would be harsh but effective.

The Thorigians pulsed in satisfaction, unseen light beginning to wax and wane. Translated into a human language, it might have been called laughter. For the Federation, such changes would mean survival and growth. But the Thorigians didn't care about that. Their concern was with the game itself. And when this one was over, the next should be about ready to start. That one wouldn't involve interstellar conflict; The Klingons' internal affairs would be quite sufficient. The Thorigians pulsed even more brightly in anticipation.



TRIVIA 2

And now, for the second part. This is for people who have been around for a little while, or who watch a great deal of T.V. and don't care how long the reruns have been going on. This part is also dedicated to all humans, or part humans, who have pointed ears. Make sure you keep your kids from those nasty rice-pickers.

STAR TREK-medium part.

1. What is the color of the Vulcan sky?
2. What were some of the names Flint used throughout history? (Give five)
3. What is McCoy's daughter's name?
4. What is fizzbin?
5. In which episode was the classic battle between races characterized?
6. What is "hell" on Gideon?
7. In what episode does McCoy join another race?
8. In Mirror, Mirror; what throws the landing party to another universe?
9. Who was in that landing party?
10. Who was the voice of the "Guardian"?

Technical Description - The Kanchatka 780

Well--as is the wont of most fanzines, incomplete planning, and my reluctance to take pen to paper, prevented an article from gracing these pages. It was to be an in-depth account of how I go about designing and executing the graphics for Raunschiff 1. I could not entirely shrink my responsibilities, so I'll describe the Prowler from Ann Wilson's story.

The Type 780 is an interstellar craft, used primarily as a fast courier or high-value cargo carrier, depending on the type of hard- and software on board. The crew varies from four to ten.

The passenger accommodations are highly flexible, palletized state-rooms and/or moveable partitions and modular furnishings and support equipment provide for the privacy and comfort of as many as thirty or more Irschchans or humans. Traiti, because of their height and space requirements, find the Type 780 too small for continuous transportation needs.

Life support includes a system in which CO₂ is broken and, with the aid of waste water, recombined to form O₂ and simple sugars for immediate consumption or to support the bacterial solid waste system. The bacterial by-products can be used as an emergency protein supplement. The life support is multi-redundant and can function for considerable lengths on its independent power supplies. This, coupled with environmental systems, are duplicated in each compartment of the ship.

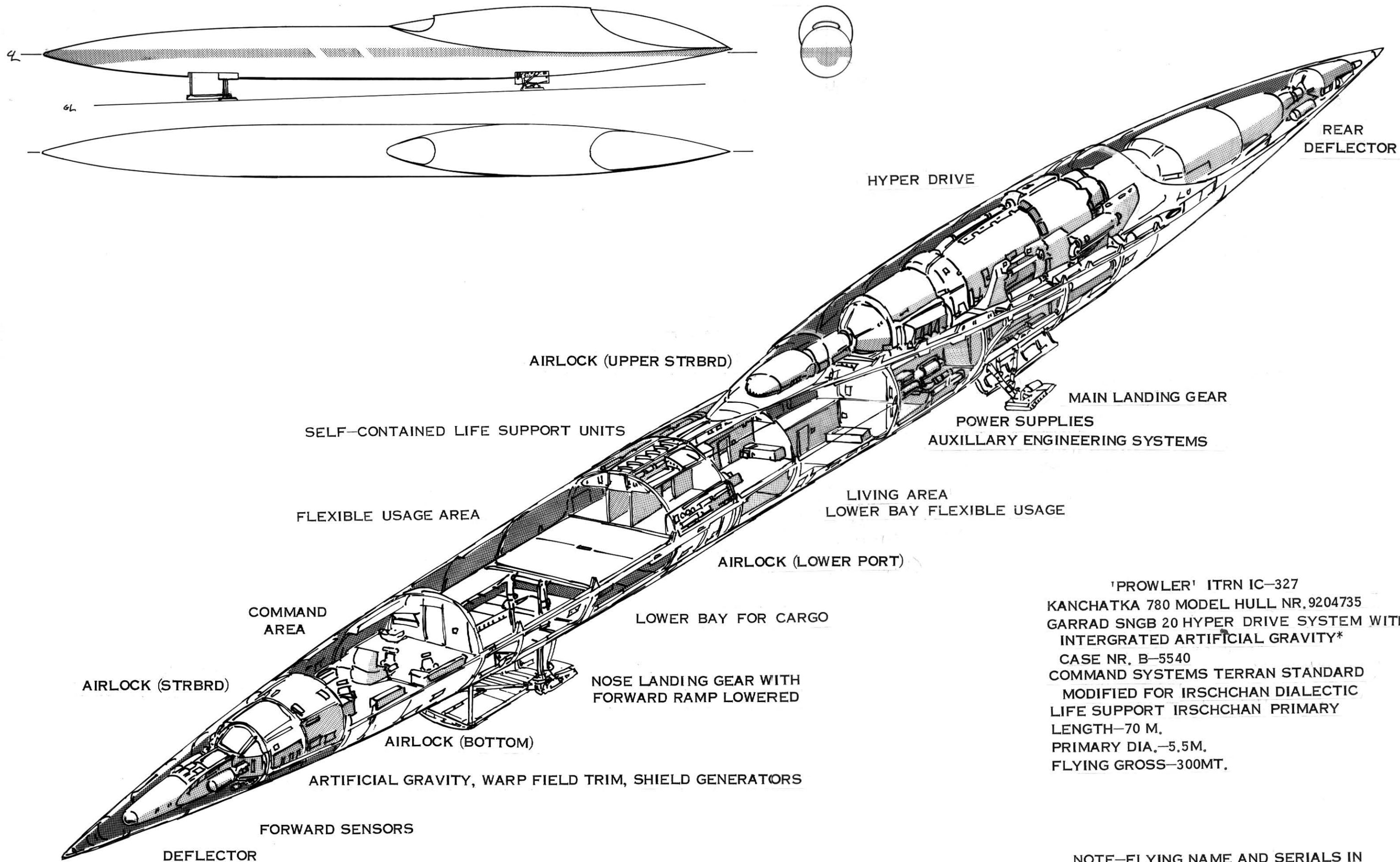
Ship's drive, originally designed for much larger craft, give it a power surplus unmatched by all but certain special mission military types. Maximum speeds can be expressed in light years per hour during periods of optimum hyperdrive conditions. Due to the nature of hyperdrive, relativistic phenomenae are negligible and real-time/subjective time variances are practically nonexistent.

The artificial grav/anti-acceleration field generators are integral hull and deck components. Special fore- and aft-trimming field generators maintain uniform field configuration and supplement the ship's shields. The shields are de-rated military types. These provide excellent protection in normal operation but provide no defense against Imperial Fleet-tuned beam energy weapons.

The primary hull is made up of three longitudinal sections of fiber/polymer skin joined together with all major components in place within. There are close spaced alloy or fiber/polymer ribs which serve as attachment points for interior skins and secondary components, but the hull skin itself provides the structural strength.

The outer hull skin applied in small segments that can be detached and replaced as necessary, self-sealing gel between the skins can seal punctures to 3 cm. It is also enriched with "hungry" heavy metals for radiation absorption/shielding. After prolonged irradiation, contaminated gel can be quickly purged and replaced.

There is a supplemental ballistic/ablative armor fore and aft around vital systems.



'PROWLER' ITRN IC-327
 KANCHATKA 780 MODEL HULL NR. 9204735
 GARRAD SGNB 20 HYPER DRIVE SYSTEM WITH
 INTERGRATED ARTIFICIAL GRAVITY*
 CASE NR. B-5540
 COMMAND SYSTEMS TERRAN STANDARD
 MODIFIED FOR IRSCHCHAN DIALECTIC
 LIFE SUPPORT IRSCHCHAN PRIMARY
 LENGTH-70 M.
 PRIMARY DIA.-5.5M.
 FLYING GROSS-300MT.

NOTE-FLYING NAME AND SERIALS IN
 IRSCHCHAN DIALECTIC
 * FORMERLY EUROGROUP P. 1070

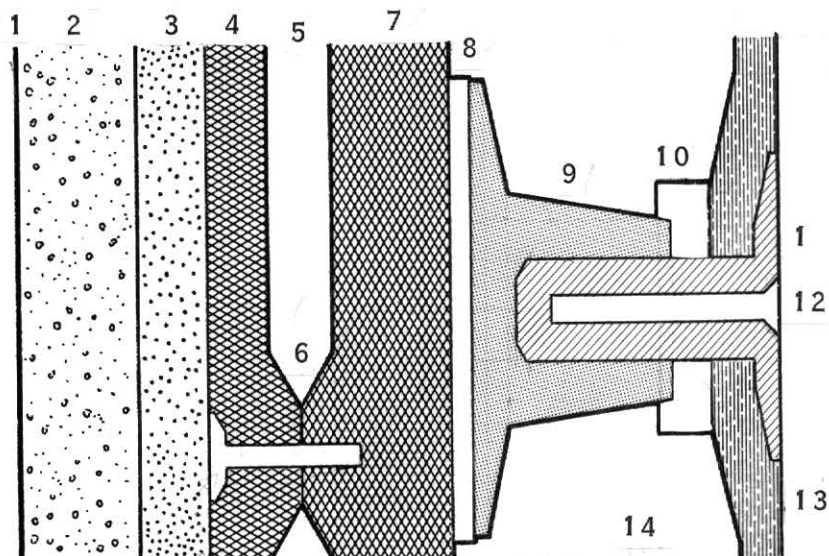
The main drive and its cover are separate units that are interfaced after the main hull is complete. As such, it is possible to quickly change the entire propulsion system. The drive, as are all areas of the ship, are accessible and pressurizable for maintenance.

The main landing gear are simple all-terrain hover pads that retract aft. The forward gear serve as guides for the cargo lift and retract vertically. There is a folding ramp in the lift that serves as primary egress. The lift is rated for 20 tons but is only 2 x 4 meters which limits it to class-C or smaller cargo pallets and containers. A supplemental hoist, rated at 15 tons, is mounted on tracks in the cargo area ceiling and travels the entire length of the lower deck; various waldoes can be fitted to this track for special purpose cargo handling. The cargo area can serve as a large volume airlock. There are four small personal airlocks on board, but they are not normally used as exits except when an airlock function is required.

The ship's computer is a small and reliable Faun-Sherba or Euro-Tech designed Talbot 14 series which handles basic computations and automatic systems. All command action and decision-making is done by the crew.

SHIP'S SKIN CROSS-SECTION

- 1 SELECTIVE RADIATION REFLECTIVE COATING (NON METALIC)
- 2 ABLATIVE/INSULATIVE FOAM CERAMIC
- 3 INSULATIVE FOAM CERAMIC
- 4 LIGHT ELEMENT FIBER/HYPERPOLYMER OUTER HULL SKIN
- 5 SELF SEALING GEL INRICHED FOR RADATION ABSORBTION
- 6 ATTACHMENT PIN
- 7 LIGHT ELEMENT FIBER/HYPERPOLYMER PRIMARY HULL SKIN
- 8 FLEXIBLE SKIN/RIB INTERFACE
- 9 CAST ALLOY OR FIBER/POLYMER INTERIOR RIB
- 10 VIBRATION CUSHION
- 11 FLEXIBLE CONNECTOR
- 12 LOCK-IN PIN
- 13 COMPARTMENT SKIN
- 14 UTILITY GAP



Dragons' Song

Dragons of Pern, be true
Gold, Bronze, Brown, Green and Blue
For worlds are lost and worlds are saved
From the dangers dragon-braved.

Dragonqueens of burnished gold
Heavy, truly, is your load.
On your golden wings and head
Rest the troubles dragon-bred.

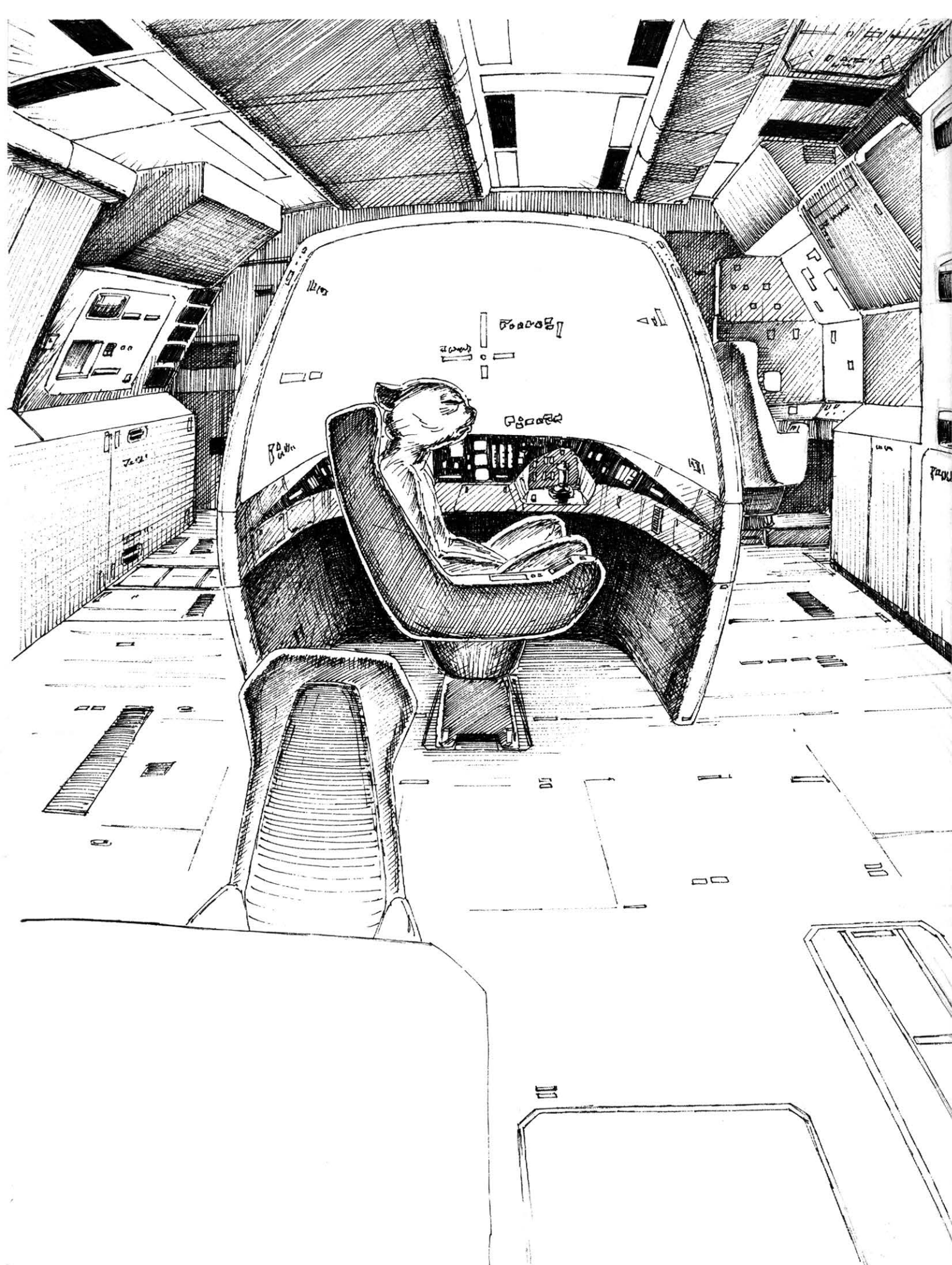
Fighting dragons of colors all
Listen to me for I call
Through the essence of space and time
To a planet that can never be mine.

Your world is bright and filled with mirth
As was my world of Earth.
But it grew so very, very cold
After that war did explode.

"Destroy the Red Star", that you ask.
That truly, is an impossible task.
Destroying the planet as you say
Would hurt Pern too, some way.

So, we must leave your planet, true,
Please don't ever be blue
For gone is our planet and our home
So we must forever roam.

--Jeannine McClure



A Matter of Honor

Ann Wilson

Chaos take those Imperial schools anyway! Thark thought angrily, increasing his speed as Prowler's slim shape came into sight. They might be all right for the unTalented, like humans or Traitl, but they were no good here on Irschcha. Their irritating stress on Imperial, rather than planetary allegiance, had deprived him of the strongest Talent to appear in many years, Corina Losinj. And it would cost Corina her life soon, if it had not already.

He was practically running toward his small ship now, dignity forgotten in the need for haste. "Dammit all to hell!" he burst out, the human curse seeming oddly appropriate under the circumstances. If the Terran Empire hadn't discovered Irschcha for another century, or if Chear had only refused to affiliate with it, none of this would have had to happen.

He forced his thoughts and emotions under control, away from such useless speculation, as he neared the ship. His calm voice did not betray his feelings when he returned the salute of the grey-kilted Peace Enforcer at the foot of the boarding ramp.

"Greetings, UnderOfficer Jamar. What is Prowler's status?"

"Greetings, Master Thark. Lady Valla and Master Kainor are already on board, as is the rest of my squad. The ship is ready for liftoff."

"Excellent," Thark said. "We leave immediately, then. We have no time to waste."

He strode up into the ship. Jamar followed, stopping to raise the ramp and close the lock. Thark went on to the cockpit and strapped himself into the pilot's seat, scanning his instrumentation. He was an accomplished pilot, and enjoyed piloting his own ship, even under these circumstances.

Excellent, he thought, Jamar was correct. The ship is ready. He triggered the immediate-takeoff alarm, then fed full power to the null-gravs. There was no need to wait for clearance; this was a private field, one of his prerogatives as First Master of the White Order.

As soon as they were a safe ten diameters from Irschcha he activated the hyperdrive, then unstrapped himself and rose. Prowler's course to Rendavi, where the Crusade's leaders were to meet, had been fed into the navigation computer several days ago, with an automatic update programmed every standard hour.

He started to leave the cockpit--once they'd transitioned into hyperspace, a pilot was not necessary until time to re-transition and land--but hesitated. At the moment, he did not really feel like talking to either Valla or Kainor.

He returned to the controls and sat down, staring into the blank viewscreen and visualizing the morning's unexpected and upsetting developments. Perhaps if he had handled things differently...

He had arranged things so he could be free all day, knowing that would not be possible much longer. The weather had cooperated almost as if it were sentient; although it was still early spring, the day had been brilliant, the temperature a comfortable fifteen degrees Celsius. He had taken advantage of that, deciding to have Corina's lesson out on the sundeck.

He took several seating cushions outside and arranged them so the sun would warm them yet be out of his and Corina's eyes, then leaned back on one set and waited for her. Relaxing almost totally, he watched a small cloud drifting in the clear, green sky. The sun's gentle warmth on his fur was most enjoyable. It was a pleasant change, he mused, to be able to relish such a day with no duties to interfere. His position as First Master made such luxuries all too rare.

Corina's lessons were a self-imposed duty, one there was no need for him to have assumed, but he was pleased that he had. He was looking forward to her initiation into the White Order, and the fact that he had trained her himself would make that doubly pleasurable.

It was fortunate, he knew, that she was available at all. Her Talent had developed quite late, so had been missed by the Order's usual pre-school testing--one of the things, he thought bitterly, the Empire hadn't tried to change. Although the examiner thought she sensed something, Corina had been unable to receive even the simplest thoughts, and hadn't had even a trace of screen.

She'd been seventeen, almost eighteen years old, Standard, when she found herself starting to pick up thoughts and went to an Order chapter for help and possible training. The chapter had reported to him, of course; when Talent appeared so late, it was almost always minimal--usually only telepathy and a weak mind-screen--and the tester had been surprised at Corina's strength.

It had surprised Thark himself, when he scanned her, and he had decided then to take her as his own student. Two years' training had brought out the potential he had sensed in her when they met, and it would be formally recognized soon, when she was initiated and he could bring her into the Prime Chapter where he could fully utilize her Talents. He certainly had no intention of letting them go to waste. Lady Corina of the White Order, he thought--yes, it had a pleasant ring.

He glimpsed her then, watched her coming up the rubberoid walk to his raised sundeck. As usual, she was precisely on time. She certainly wasn't hard to spot; all her kilts were bright, but the red and gold one she favored and was wearing now was positively garish. Na, perhaps her taste would improve as she matured. He looked down at his own kilt, a conservative dark blue that went well with the tawny shade of his fur. That, with its sporran, was one of the few human innovations he appreciated.

Corina purred softly in pleasure as she saw Thark out on the sundeck. Truly, this weather was too good to waste any of it indoors, especially at this time of year. He stood as she approached.

"Good day, Master Thark," she said with a slight bow, her hands open and raised to shoulder level.

Thark returned the formal bow. "Good day, Student Losinj. My home is yours. Be welcome."

Formalities were certainly briefer since Irschcha joined the Empire, Thark mused. He wasn't certain if he approved of that or not. They had been time-consuming, but they had also given life a certain grace that now seemed lacking. They had also provided a social lubricant that Irschchans, in his opinion, needed. He could be wrong, though, he thought as he returned to his cushion.

Corina took the ones he'd prepared for her, to sit facing him. "What's today's lesson, Master?"

"At this stage, you will have to tell me. Further training will be directed to any area in which you feel deficient."

Her mind shield was down, so he could feel her surprise. "I do not understand, Master."

"The only thing you truly require now is more confidence in yourself. Otherwise you are ready for initiation, and I would like to see that happen as soon as possible."

Corina shook her head slowly. "I do not feel ready to take on such responsibilities, Master. I have not had the psychological preparation of those who have attended Order schools."

"Your feelings are understandable," Thark said sympathetically. "You know, however, that you already have as much power and control as any Senior in the Prime Chapter."

"Na..." She hesitated. "I did stalemate Lady Valla in our last practice session."

"Yes, she told me, and she was quite pleased about it. She and Kainor agree with me that you are ready, and if you are willing, they have asked to sponsor you."

"I would be most honored to have them as sponsors," Corina said, inclining her head. "Perhaps... What do you plan for me after initiation?"

"I want to bring you into the Prime Chapter, where one with your amount of Talent belongs. As for a specific job, we think such Talent and your other abilities can best be utilized as a roving supervisor in Valla's Intelligence Division."

Corina considered that. It would be an interesting job, she had no doubt of that. The Intelligence Division got the most difficult cases the Peace Enforcers had to cope with, and since they were Irschcha's military as well as its police, the variety of such cases was truly remarkable. It was tempting, though she doubted she would be able to handle it. "I have not yet finished school," she objected.

"I have not forgotten. Until you graduate, you will work part time as Valla's assistant. She will train you for the job."

"Perhaps that, then. I think I would like it. But the Prime Chapter..."

"You will not be expected to participate fully until you do graduate, Corina. By that time, you should be sure enough of yourself to function properly as a Senior."

"Under those conditions, Master, I can honorably agree."

"Excellent!" Thark had hoped that would convince her. "As part of your further development, I would like you to do some teaching. Instruction of others is one of the best ways known to learn more of yourself and develop your abilities beyond the point to which someone else can take you."

"That I will do gladly. I do not feel as fully developed as I should be."

"Perhaps not, but your Talent is truly remarkable." Thark was quite pleased. By the time he was ready to step down, he thought with pride, she should be capable of taking over the leadership of the Order--which, if his Crusade were successful, would have taken over rule of the Empire by then, from the unTalented humans. The end of the Traitl war made that possible in the near future.

It wasn't that humans were stupid, he thought--some, in fact, were quite intelligent--and the Empire was, as far as it went, a fairly good government. It was simply that they were so limited by the lack of Talent! That, unfortunately, seemed to be restricted to Irschchans.

He must not have been fully shielded, he realized, when he saw the look on Corina's face. "What Crusade?" she asked curiously. Thark felt her probing for more information, and reinforced his shield.

"Forget it," he advised. "You are supposed to know nothing about that until after your initiation."

"Why not?"

"Because it is Order business, and you are not yet oath-bound."

"Oh." She seemed to accept that, but Thark was not completely sure; he was familiar with her curiosity, and it would be no surprise to him if she kept trying to find out. He would have to be careful to keep his shield up.

"All I can tell you now," he said, hoping to ease that curiosity, "is that it will make the Galaxy a better place to live."

Corina became, if anything, more curious. Thark had seemed preoccupied for the last half year, and so had the other Seniors she knew. It was clear something was going on; she had known that for some time. She had asked nothing about it because she sensed Thark had been reluctant to discuss it. Now, though, it appeared that whatever this Crusade was, it concerned her future. She felt, now, that she had a right to know about it.

She probed again at Thark's shield, but he was too strong for her to get anything through it. All she knew was what she had overheard, and even then she had gotten little. Just the term 'Crusade', the fact that she was somehow involved, and a feeling of impending triumph. But what kind of triumph, and over what? Or...who?

"Is it something that will affect the Empire?" she asked.

"Something that will improve it," Thark replied. "You must admit that it is not perfect--"

He was interrupted by a mindcall from Valla, one of the Seniors and his chief aid. *What is it, Thark? I felt your disturbance--*

Not now, Valla! Her thought cut off, but too late; the momentary distraction had enabled Corina to break through his lowered shield. He could see, as well as feel, her reaction, and it was not what he had hoped for; it was what he had feared.

Corina was both shocked and angry. Shocked that Thark would ever plan such a rebellion, and angry that he would plan it and expect her...! She had been raised an Imperial subject, even if Thark had not, and she could not understand his desire for change. Yet she liked as well as respected him, both as teacher and friend, and did not want to believe he would actually go through with such a thing.

Her thoughts were a turmoil of conflicting loyalties. The Empire, she had been taught, was what kept the peace between planets and systems, while allowing maximum autonomy on-planet by the system of chartering planetary governments through the nobility. By their own charter, Irschcha's Waldgrave worked through the White Order, making Thark, as First Master, virtually as powerful as he would have been before the Empire.

Why, then, did he want change? Perhaps that should not concern her as much as the fact that he did. She was due for initiation; in honor, could she oppose him, or was it in fact her duty to do so? She was bound by no oaths, was technically free to choose. Blades! she thought angrily. Why did Thark put her in such a position?

Perhaps if she got more information she would know what to do. She kept her voice steady. "Can such a rebellion not be considered simple treason, Master Thark? Will it not destroy the Empire rather than improve it?"

Thark considered his student. It was natural for her to be concerned; he himself was not particularly fond of the idea of the bloodshed that appeared necessary. At the very minimum, the Emperor, Rangers, and nobility would have to be eliminated, and he knew that there would be others.

"It might be so considered, but it is something that cannot be helped," he said calmly. "You should be able to see that for yourself. Look at the peace and balance that rule by the Order has brought Irschcha since it was founded, then look at the constant unrest and controversy elsewhere in the Empire. Which is better?"

Corina was uncomfortable. "Peace, of course." She hesitated, then said, "But that is no way to bring peace. And there is a considerable difference between ruling one race on one planet and ruling an Empire of hundreds of worlds and four intelligent, space-capable races, not to mention the planet-bound ones."

"Less than you might think," he said, pleased at her composure. A difference of opinion need not be disorderly, and her temper at times like this was uncertain. "We need only replace key people with our own most strongly Talented initiates. The bureaucracy and computers will, as now, handle day-to-day operations."

"With you, the strongest Talent, as Emperor?" There was a bare trace of sarcasm in that question.

"Of course," Thark said, mildly surprised and ignoring the sarcasm. "It is not something I particularly want to do--" He broke off, looked at her sharply. "It is indeed unfortunate that you did not attend an Order school."

He probed gently. She was angry, of course; he could tell that even through her shield, but she seemed to be keeping her emotions mostly under control. Good. She might still be amenable to reason.

"I have told you many times," he said patiently, "that possession of Talent carries responsibility with it. We of the Order are able to use our Talent to govern better than those who lack it, so honor demands that we do so. We cannot avoid our duty."

He could feel her rejection of that argument even before she spoke. "That may apply to Irschcha, but it is obviously not true of humans. They did quite well before MacLeod found us, despite their lack of Talent, and things have improved for Irschcha since we joined the Empire."

"Some things, yes," Thark admitted. "We have hyperships now, like my Prowler, we are benefitting by the trade with other systems, we are starting colonies, we have people in the Imperial Navy---"

"And in the Emperor's own Palace Guard!" she interrupted.

"But that is not enough!"

"Is that not considerable progress since they found us only forty-three S-years ago? Can you expect more so soon? We are only a small part of the Empire."

"I cannot accept that," Thark growled. "We are being humiliated! We must even use human units of measurement. S-years? Earth years is what that means."

"Still--"

"We have no one in the nobility except here on Irschcha itself," Thark continued, ignoring her attempted protest, "no Irschchan is a Ranger, none command Navy vessels. Is that just?"

"It is if the humans have talents or abilities we lack."

Thark groaned inwardly. This was not going well, but she was too valuable to lose; he would have to keep trying.

"They do not," he told her. "I have scanned a large number of humans, tourists and diplomats alike. They have no indication of Talent or anything else unusual, except perhaps an occasional trace of screen. They are exactly what they seem. All they have is a very sophisticated technology."

"Perhaps that is their talent," Corina said. "They found us, we did not find them. Or perhaps their special ability is even rarer with them than Talent is with us."

"If that is the case," Thark replied, "it would seem they cannot use it to govern properly, or refuse to do so. Either way, our duty is clear." He was silent then, sensing her need to think.

Corina was deeply disturbed. Thark's arguments were plausible, at least on the surface, but she found them unsatisfying. Tourists and diplomats were not the Empire's best, especially the tourists. Thark claimed his motive was unselfish--duty--and she knew him well enough that she believed he truly thought so. But what if he was wrong?

Chaos take it! Peace was important, and she could see it as an end result--perhaps--of Thark's rebellion. But first there would be much death and destruction. With the Traiti war barely over, what Thark planned might as easily trigger a disaster as lead to the peace he expected.

It was a difficult decision; no matter what she did, people would be harmed. Yet Thark himself had taught her that her responsibility to Irschcha was paramount, which meant she had to support the Empire. In honor, that was the only way she could decide. Irschcha had done better in its forty-three years since joining the Empire than in any span ten times that long under the Order.

Once her decision was made, she did not hesitate. She stood, then said with a return to strict formality, "I can regard your Crusade as nothing but treason, Thark. I can no longer call you Master."

Thark also stood, nodding his acceptance. At least, he thought, she was acting as he had taught her, with honor and decorum. "We are enemies, then. I regret the necessity. Will you at least give me your word that you will not go to the Imperial authorities?" He did not expect her to, but had to give her the opportunity.

"I cannot do that," Corina said. "You have taught me too well. Failing to act now, when I know what is right, would be as dishonorable as treason itself."

"It would indeed," Thark replied. "You leave me no choice. I cannot let you live to reach the Imperials with this information, either. And I certainly cannot let you help them."

Fear almost weakened Corina's resolve. She did not want to die, but death appeared unavoidable. If she had to think about it too much, she might give in, though, and that would be worse. "I must try," she said steadily. "What of my family?"

"They are not involved," Thark replied. "They will not be disturbed. If you wish, I will give them your soul-blade."

"I am not yet dead," Corina said, touching the dagger's hilt. Then she turned and left.

"No," Thark said softly, watching her leave, "not yet." As soon as she was out of sight, he mindcalled his aid. *Valla? I have a job for you.*

Yes? came the calm reply.

Corina Losinj must be killed. She broke through my shield when your call distracted me, and discovered the Crusade. She has just left, and is going to report to the Imperials.

Corina! Valla's thought was surprised. *But I thought--* She hesitated. *Are you certain, Master? Why would she--*

Apparently her lack of Order schooling. I cannot fault her; it is simply that her loyalties lie with the Empire rather than with us. Still, she is a danger that must be eliminated.

Understood, Master. She was a good friend, and most Talented. Valla had felt a regret in Thark's mind-touch, and shared it, but there was no time for that now. *This is an unfortunate happening. I will take care of it.*

With your usual efficiency, of course. But not personally. Set it up--tell the Enforcers she is wearing that red and gold kilt--then meet me at my ship. Bring Kainor. I am speeding up the timetable. The Prime Chapter and other Crusade leaders are to gather as soon as possible on Rendavi. Inform your people.

What of her family?

They are oathbound. Disregard them.

Yes, Master Thark. Is there more?

No.

Thark broke contact, then made three more mindcalls before going inside to use the ultrawave. Once the off-planet leaders were informed of the accelerated schedule, he left for the local spacefield and the Prowler.

Thark's attention returned to Prowler's control room. In retrospect, he was as sure of Corina's thoughts as if he had read them. He laid his ears back in a frown. No, he could see no way he might have changed the morning's events. It was most regrettable, both the loss of such a Talent and Corina's death. He had been quite fond of her.

Enough of these useless memories, Thark told himself sternly. What has happened cannot be changed. He might as well join his passengers.

Corina was thinking swiftly as she left Thark's home. She was certain he would lose no time sending executioners after her, probably Peace Enforcers, and was not particularly optimistic about her chances of making it safely to the Planetary Palace and the Imperial authorities.

Thark's home was ten kilometers north of the capital city, MacLeod's Landing. It would be a long, time-consuming walk, but she had no choice. With Enforcers on the job, using her ID to call for public transportation at one of the hailing posts would be a fatal mistake. It would simply make their work easier.

Occasional clumps of bushes bordering the street's short-cropped grass gave her an idea. She was fairly conspicuous; there were few pedestrians this far from the city, and as Thark had told her often enough, she did dress rather loudly. She ducked into one of the clumps, took off her kilt, turned it inside-out, and put it back on. It was a youngling's trick, but... She surveyed the results. Not good. Still, it might help. At least the solid maroon lining was a little less garish than red and gold plaid.

She returned to the grassy street--hovercars didn't need pavement--and resumed her walk toward the city. Small as it was by human standards, it was already large by Irschchan, and still growing. If she could reach it, there was at least a chance she could avoid the Enforcers in the relative crowds, and reach the Palace.

She had been walking for perhaps five minutes when an Enforcement cruiser whooshed past, toward Thark's house. The wind of its passage ruffled her fur as well as her kilt. They seemed to pay no attention to her, for which she was grateful.

Na, that was what she had hoped. If she were obvious enough, the Enforcers should think she had nothing to hide. With that and her kilt-flipping, unless she ran into an Enforcer who knew her by her shield pattern, she just might make it.

Bare minutes later, her hopes fell as she heard the cruiser approaching again. It stopped in front of her and three gray-kilted Peace Enforcers got out.

Besides the usual sporran and soul-blades everyone carried, the Enforcers wore their collars of office, gleaming gold bands snug at their throats. Their blasters, normally worn on belt clips, were all pointed in her direction. Scorch marks around the muzzles showed the weapons had all seen use.

Corina let herself sag. These Enforcers were big, and they were treating her as cautiously as they would a dangerous criminal. From the Order's point of view, though, she thought, that was now an accurate description.

"All right, Losinj," the oldest one said, "hands on your head, and don't move."

Corina obeyed, moving slowly to give herself time to think. These three would have tight mind shields, and anyway, the most she had been able to handle in practice was two--which Thark, of course, knew. She was in no position to fight. Her only chance was to get them to relax, drop their shields voluntarily. Unless they were going to kill her here...

Which they were apparently not going to do. Two stood back, perhaps three meters from her and equally distant from each other, their blasters steady on target. The leader, staying carefully out of their line of fire, approached her. He unclipped the soul-blade, sheath and all, from her belt and attached it to his own.

"It will be returned intact to your family for their Hall of Memories after your execution, as Lady Valla has ordered," he told her

"My thanks to Lady Valla," Corina said, her voice shaky. So Thark had turned her case over to Valla. That wasn't good news at all. She knew Valla well, had in fact gotten some training from her, and they were friends, though not close ones. But Valla didn't let friendship interfere with her work, and she had a well-earned reputation for thoroughness and efficiency. At least, Corina thought, she does not dishonor me by ordering my blade destroyed.

The Enforcer moved behind her. "Put your hands down, behind your back."

She obeyed, felt cool metallic bands close around her wrists. The Enforcer took hold of her arm just above the elbow.

"Into the cruiser, youngling."

She got in, was seated between him and another Enforcer, both with blasters aimed at her. The third took his place at the controls, heading them toward MacLeod's Landing and Enforcer Headquarters. She put her sort-of-a-plan into action; uncertain as it was, she had been able to think of nothing else.

Huddling up, she let her shield relax slightly. As the cruiser picked up speed, she felt the Enforcer try a probe. Don't fight it, she told herself, use it.

She shivered, letting the screen drop even further and allowing her only partially falsified fear to seep through. If she could convince them that she was terrified, too paralyzed with panic to be a danger, she might have a chance.

The Enforcement leader looked at her for a moment, then said, with some sympathy, "You seem harmless enough, hardly a dangerous criminal; why does Lady Valla want you dead, youngling?"

"I do not know," Corina lied, projecting more fright. "I mean... I have done nothing..." She let her voice trail off.

"Na, there is no need to worry," the officer said, apparently trying to reassure her. "It may be a death lacking somewhat in honor, but the executioner here is good. It will be fast and painless."

It didn't reassure Corina, and she let that show in her expression. She looked up at the Enforcement leader, shivering again. "But...I don't want to die! I have done nothing to die for!"

"Youngling, it is not for me to question Lady Valla's orders, but I admit I do not like this assignment. My own daughter is about your age."

"Then--" Sudden hope dawned.

"No, youngling." The Enforcer's voice was full of pity but firm. "My honor is my duty, and my duty is to take you in."

Corina slumped, fear and a sense of helplessness seeming worse after that surge of hope. Her shield was almost all the way down. She dared not probe at the Enforcers; somehow that did not seem the thing a frightened prisoner would do. She could only hope her plan would work, but the closer they got to the city and Enforcer Headquarters, the less confidence she had in it.

The trip ended in silence. By the time they pulled up in front of the large stone building that housed the capital's Enforcers, Corina was on the ragged edge of desperation. It must have appeared more like sheer terror to the officer beside her. He dismissed the other two. "Go on in. She will give me no trouble."

They obeyed. As they entered the building, the leader climbed out of cruiser, clipped his blaster to his belt, and extended a hand to help his trembling prisoner.

That was when Corina struck. He had relaxed his shield slightly, thinking her powerless, and she had no trouble stunning him with darlas. Awkwardly, hampered by the way her hands were fastened and by her need for haste, she dug through his sporran for the handcuff key and fumbled it into the lock. The cuffs opened after what seemed hours, but could have only been seconds. Then she retrieved her dagger from his belt, half tempted to use it on him. She refrained; he had pitied her, and the killing would not be justified. Self-defense was one thing, but she could not in honor kill one who could not defend himself. She did, however, increase the mental pressure on him enough to insure he would remain unconscious for at least an hour. Then she sensed one of the other Enforcers returning, wondering idly what was keeping Garal and the prisoner.

She straightened and left at a fast walk, was around the corner and out of sight before he spotted Garal's unconscious form. She tightened her shield, feeling probes as the Enforcer yelled his discovery to others. Although she knew it would make her conspicuous, she broke into a run; she had to reach the park that encircled the Planetary Palace before the Enforcers caught her again. That was Imperial territory; Irschchan jurisdiction ended at the park's edge. She just hoped that would stop the Enforcer.

The park was in sight, less than a hundred meters away, but the Enforcer who had found Garal was fast closing the distance between them. Corina risked a glimpse behind her, saw him stop, crouch, and draw his blaster. She increased her speed somehow and started dodging. It might take her a few seconds longer to reach the park, but she would be harder to hit.

She heard the frying noise of the blaster, felt heat as the bolt singed fur on her right arm. A second shot missed completely as she dove into the park and rolled into a stand of purple-leafed bushes. A third bolt sizzled overhead, then the Enforcer returned his blaster to his belt and called to her.

"You are not safe yet, Losinj! We are not the only ones after you. Even if you manage to get past Entos and into the Palace, we can have you extradited as a common criminal. Think about that!"

"Thanks for the news," Corina called back, shaken but not, she hoped, letting it show in her voice.

Entos! Valla must have anticipated her escape from the Enforcers, Corina thought, if she had sent her best killer to attempt an intercept in the park itself.

Then she realized that was not necessarily the case. It was only that Valla was unlikely to leave such a critical matter to any one group. Still, using Entos against her showed how seriously Valla regarded this; it was rather like using a blaster to eliminate an annoying insect.

There was no point in being particularly cautious, she knew, so she hurried directly toward the Palace. She had met Entos several times, often enough that he knew her both by sight and by mind pattern, even when she was shielded.

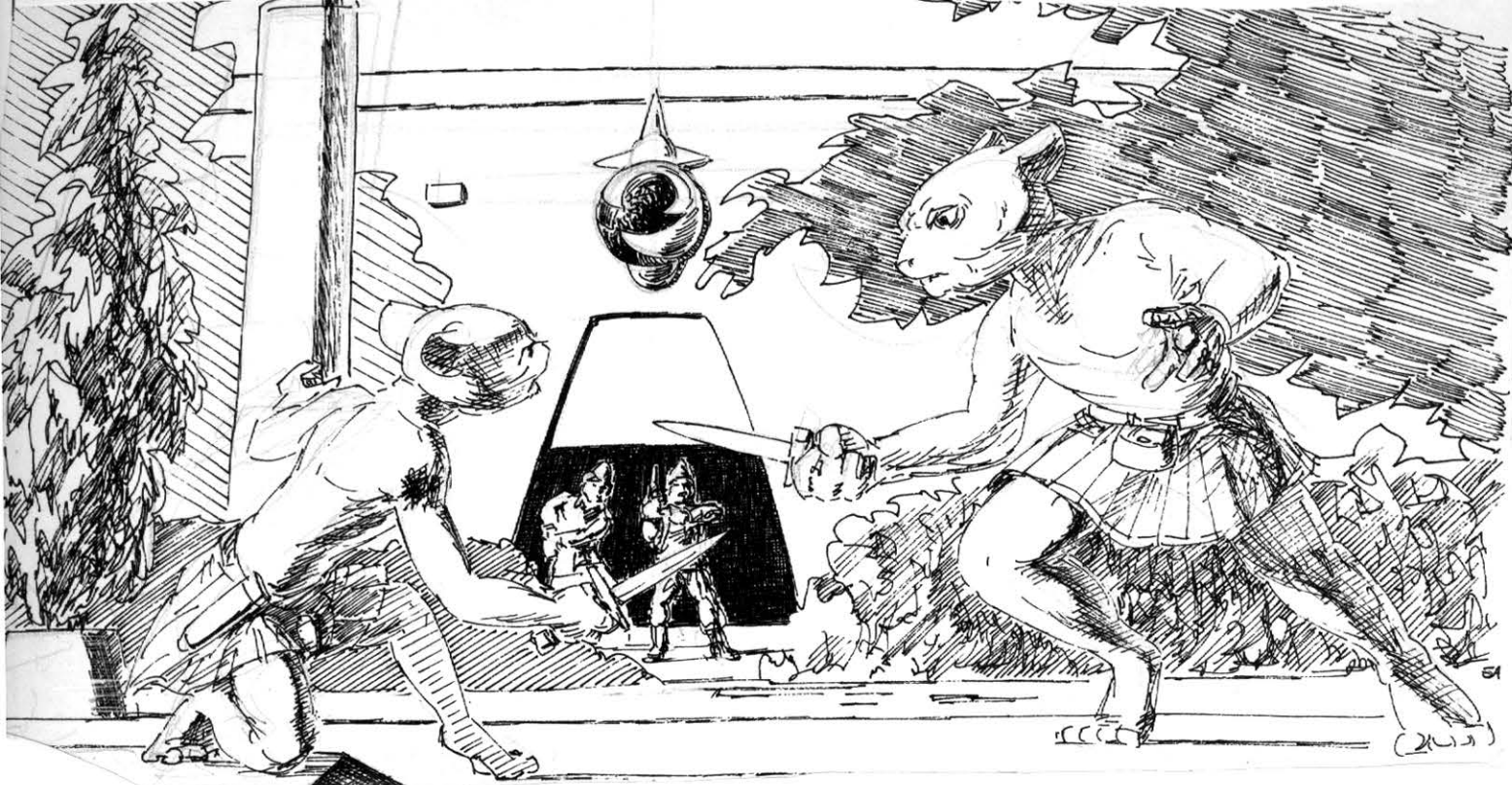
She was almost at her objective, in sight of the main entrance in fact, when the expected attack came. It started with a savage mental thrust, powerful enough to penetrate her shield and drive her to her knees. It didn't last--only Thark or one of the Seniors, which Entos wasn't, could maintain that intensity for long--but by the time she had recovered enough to stand, shaking her head to clear it, Entos was behind her. She sensed a physical threat, dove to her left just in time to feel his dagger brush her fur rather than bury itself in her back.

She scrambled to her feet, drawing her own blade and attempting a mental counterattack. It slowed Entos' next slash, but had no other effect. She stabbed at his upper arm, trying to cripple him, but he parried skillfully.

"You fight well, youngling, even now," he said, then tried another intense mental thrust. It was less powerful than the first had been, and Corina managed to block it, but was not as successful parrying his simultaneous dagger thrust at her throat. She avoided most, but it was still enough to draw blood. She felt warmth seeping into the fur at the base of her neck.

Corina said nothing, saving her breath for the fight. They were circling now, both looking for openings, when she caught a flicker of motion from the direction of the Palace entrance. She risked a quick glance, saw it was the Imperial Marine guards, running toward them and drawing sidearms.

Entos obviously saw them as well, because he snarled and aimed another thrust at her. She was starting to parry when she lost consciousness.



She woke with a splitting headache, the characteristic aftermath of being hit by a neural stunner. Groaning, she opened her eyes and found herself in what, except for the straps holding her in place, was a fairly comfortable armchair. A Terran in Marine black and silver, with a ship insignia she did not recognize, sat behind a large metal desk, holding a blaster aimed casually in her direction. Her soul-blade lay beside his left hand.

Corina suppressed the rage she dared not show at that sight. It had been bad enough earlier, when the Enforcer had taken her blade, but at least he had been an Irschchan and understood its significance. To a Terran, it was nothing but a simple dagger, with no more personal meaning than a kitchen knife.

Not that they could understand, she thought, forcing herself to calm. They had no way to sense the owner's mind-pattern, impressed on the blade at an Irschchan's coming of age ceremony

She could retrieve it telekinetically--that part of her Talent was weak, but the dagger was hers--then decided quickly against that idea. The man holding the blaster did not look like the type to tolerate any misbehavior from his prisoner, and she had no desire to test her estimate of his character.

He gave her a few seconds to evaluate the situation before he spoke. "So you're awake. Now what the hell was that all about?"

"He was trying to kill me," Corina replied.

"We guessed that," the Terran said sarcastically. "I want to know why."

"May I know who you are?"

"Yeah, you people like formality, don't you?" He shrugged. "Why not? I'm Major Michael Dawson, Security Division, on temporary duty from the Emperor Chang."

Corina nodded, satisfied. "Greetings, Major Dawson. I am Corina Losinj. He was attempting to stop me before I could report treason against the Empire by the White Order, in the form of a rebellion led by Thark himself."

Dawson's expression looked to Corina like a combination of surprise and disbelief. "Rebellion? The White Order against the whole Empire? That's impossible."

"It is quite possible," Corina assured him.

"Um." Dawson was silent for a few seconds, then said, "Well, it sounds crazy to me, but it isn't something I can afford to ignore." He holstered the blaster, then asked, "That other guy in the Order?" At Corina's nod, he punched a number on the desk intercom.

"Yes?" came the reply. Corina was unable to see the screen, but it sounded like a Terran female. "Oh, hi, Mike. What can I do for you?"

"Can you run a mind-probe on that other Irschchan who was brought in, Joanie? The one I've got here, Losinj, claims the White Order's brewing up a rebellion."

"Glad to," Joanie replied. "Do you want Losinj probed too?"

Dawson thought for a moment, then said, "Not till I report to Ranger Medart. He might want to run it himself."

"Okay. I'll let you know what I find out."

"Thanks." Dawson broke that connection, immediately punched in another number.

"Communications, Specialist Carlson, sir," came the reply.

"This is Major Dawson. Can you get me Ranger Medart, Security priority?"

"It'll take a couple of minutes, sir. I'll have to patch through to his personal hand-com."

Dawson shrugged. "As long as I can talk to him."

He sat looking speculatively at Corina until a new voice came through on the intercom. "Medart here. What's up, Major?"

Dawson repeated what Corina had told him, adding, "Sergeant Orloff said it did look like he attacked her, sir. I asked for a mind-probe run on him."

"Good. Hold off on Losinj; we may learn enough from him we won't have to probe her. If somebody thinks she's worth killing to keep her from us, she may be valuable. I don't want to risk a probe unless I have to. I'll be there in about two hours."

"Yes, sir." Dawson switched off, looked at Corina again. "I'm curious about one thing. Why didn't you call instead of coming in? If you're right, we'd have gotten the information sooner, and you'd have been safer; I could have sent a squad of Marines to escort you here for protection. You'd have been in no danger."

"I'm afraid that is not the case, Major. In the first place, there was nowhere I could call from. In the second, if the Order wants me dead, there is no safety for me anywhere on Irschcha."

"I don't know," Dawson said skeptically. "All I really know about the White Order is that they rule this planet with some sort of strange power they refuse to talk about. I think you're underestimating the Marines."

"Na, Talent is not discussed outside the Order except with possible initiates," Corina said. "At least, it has not been until now; I must alert you to what the Talented can do. It is you who underestimate them."

"Talk to Ranger Medart," Dawson said. "I'm curious, but I don't have the rank to do much about something this big."

Corina nodded, and Dawson went back to the report he'd evidently been studying when she was brought in. She tried a probe of him, finding a weak, almost non-existent mind-screen. It was not a real barrier, and her reasons were compelling, so she probed deeper. Terran mind patterns were too murky to make this sort of thing a pleasure but she scanned anyway, for information about this Ranger Medart. She knew, as did everyone, that they were the Emperor's deputies, wielding Imperial authority at need, but she had to know about this specific one.

Dawson, unfortunately, did not know much. Although he did serve aboard Medart's ship, the Emperor Chang, he was not very familiar with the Command Crew or Ranger. All she could get was his feeling of respect, bordering on awe--rather, she thought, the way she had felt about Thark until this morning.

Dawson did not expect any trouble from the Order here inside the Palace, she noted, and found herself agreeing. Thark was not likely to risk compromising the Crusade by a frontal attack now. There would probably be an attempt, though, as the Enforcer had said, to have her returned as a criminal.

Perhaps an hour passed before the intercom chimed. Dawson answered it, and Corina overheard Joanie's report.

"Just finished that mind-probe you asked for, Mike. He was trying to kill Losinj, all right. His orders came from Lady Valla; she told him Losinj was betraying the Order. He also knows about the existence of a Crusade; that's what they call this rebellion. I couldn't get any details, though. And when he woke up, he somehow managed to knock out a couple of my technicians without even touching them. I had to hit him with another stunner, and I'm going to keep him out until I get orders to the contrary."

"Uh-huh, that confirms what she told me. He probably doesn't have enough rank to know any details. Was he the only one?"

The intercom emitted a grim laugh. "Hardly. From what I got, every Order member on Irschcha is either out to kill her themselves or report her whereabouts to Enforcement so they can do it."

"Thanks, Joanie, I appreciate it." Dawson switched off the intercom and turned to Corina. "I guess it's safe enough to release you now." He touched a switch on the desk, and the restraining straps retracted into the armchair.

"May I have my blade back?" Corina could not keep a note of pleading out of her voice.

Dawson looked at her sharply. "It means that much to you? Well, I don't see why not; take it."

"I thank you." Corina retrieved the blade, ran her fingers gently along it before returning it to its sheath, and resumed her seat. She sensed the Marine's puzzlement. Perhaps she could explain. "It is a part of me, in a way. Seeing it in someone else's possession makes me quite uncomfortable."

Dawson shook his head. "I don't understand. I know it means you're an adult, but it's just a knife."

"It is more," Corina said, her ears twitching. "My mind pattern--" She broke off at Dawson's blank look. "It is an Irschchan thing. I fear I cannot explain it well."

Dawson shrugged. "Doesn't matter." He turned his attention back to his report.

Corina took that opportunity to think. She was, she had to admit to herself, rather frightened. It was not fear for her life, what she had felt when the Enforcers captured her; it was more nervous apprehension about her future. She could not remain on Irschcha; as she had told Dawson, if she did she would die.

But where could she go? What could she do? Her peaceful life certainly had not prepared her for this kind of situation, suddenly caught in the middle of a rebellion. Things were happening too fast, overwhelming her. She wasn't sure what to expect from Ranger Medart, either. He'd said she might be valuable--what had he meant?

Na, there was nothing she could do now but wait, as patiently as she could, until he arrived.



TO BE CONTINUED

TRIVIA 3

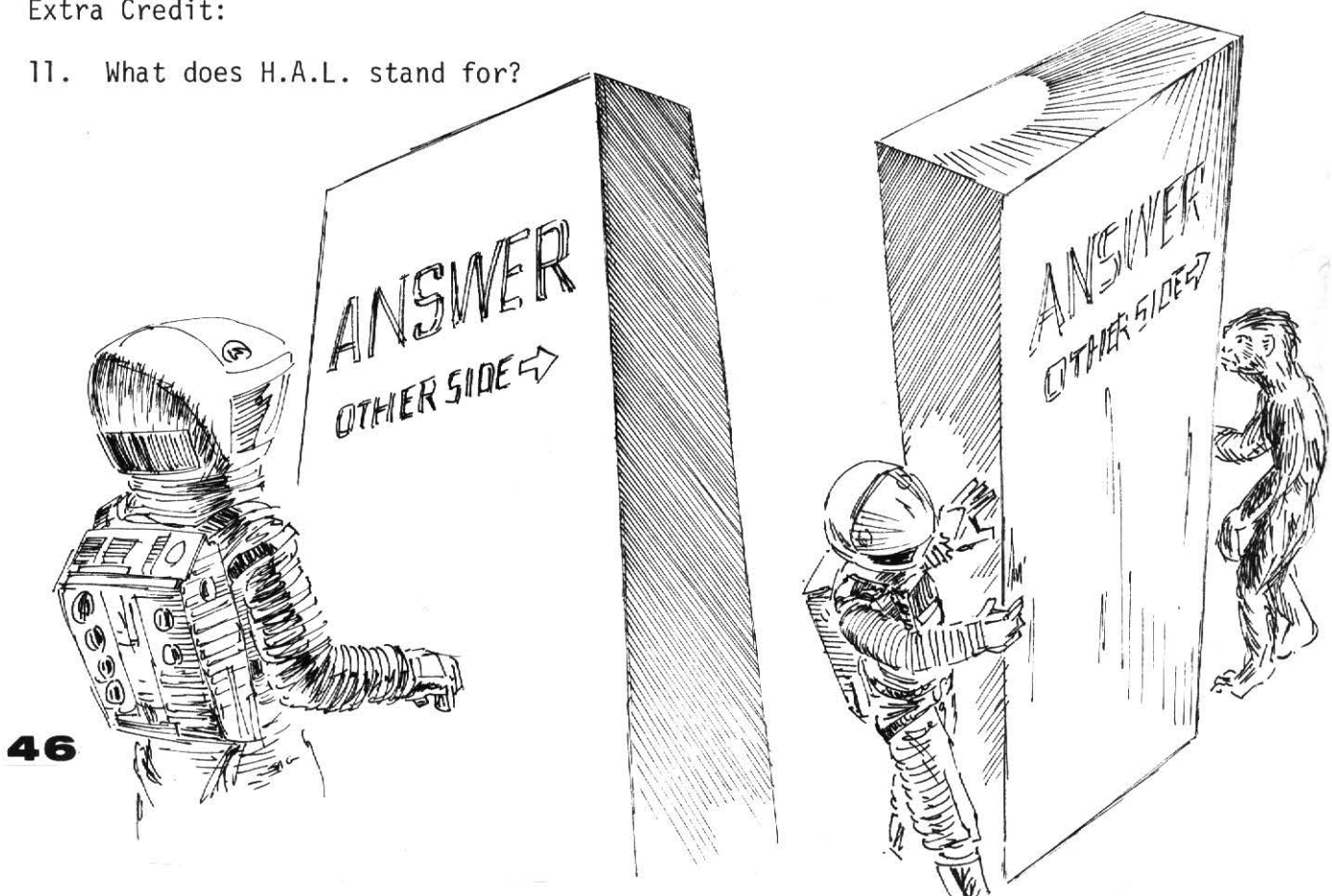
And now for the last part of our trivia quiz for this issue. If you have enjoyed doing these quizzes, then please write and tell us so we may continue to go through our oldie but moldie files. Personally, I think that this movie is one of the greatest movies ever made, if not the greatest. So, without any more introduction, here is:

2001: A Space Odyssey

1. What is the first visual special effect in the movie?
2. What does TMA-1 stand for?
3. What set off the radio emission from the monolith on the moon?
4. What was H.A.L.'s numeric designation?
5. Whose voice was used for H.A.L.'s?
6. What was the ship's name?
7. What was the space station's designation?
8. How many space suits were in the pod bay?
9. How many repair pods were there?
10. What company was running the shuttle between the space station and Earth?

Extra Credit:

11. What does H.A.L. stand for?



Murphy's Law

Stephen Jaspar

The two men walked into the warehouse, where they kept the movie props. They walked to the back and went into a chamber the size of a freight elevator. The taller of the two pushed a small white button. A speaker hidden into the walls said, "Voice print." The man said, "Voice print seven-oh-nine. Code word: Albatross." The walls replied, "You are clear, Professor Weiss. Who is the other person?"

"This is Professor Marcus Cipra. Do you have his voice print on file?"

"Yes. Professor, please state your full name, date of birth, and place of birth."

Cipra cleared his throat, "Professor Marcus Theodore Cipra, July sixteenth, nineteen hundred and forty five. San Francisco, California."

"You are clear. Have a nice trip and I'll see you in a few minutes." The elevator started down, gaining speed. Cipra looked out the observation port and saw solid rock for a moment and then the complex. He gasped at the sight. It was a huge cavern, filled with computers and machines some of which he didn't recognize.

"Very impressive." He commented after getting over the shock.

"We're almost to the control center." Weiss told him. "Remember the voice? That was Mary." The elevator stopped. They got out and Weiss pointed to a control panel and then to a camera. "That," he said with a smile, "is Mary."

Cipra looked at the camera and asked, "A computer?"

"Yes, the world's only thinking computer, that we know of. Well, let's go. We don't have much time." They walked into another room. As they walked Weiss briefed him.

"Orbiting Earth is an alien craft. Now, we don't know if it's hostile, but it is highly advanced and uses a propulsion system we don't know the slightest thing about. This complex is designed to ward off any craft or beings attacking Earth, but it may not do any good this time."

"Is it anything like that ship we found in 1980?" Cipra asked him.

"Somewhat. It is much bigger, though. We've been sending radio signals to it, but so far no reply."

Five hours later, they got their answer. Some type of energy bolt came down from the ship, or whatever it was, causing a huge explosion and uncontrollable forest fire in southern Canada. They contacted the United Governments of Earth and told them of the situation, and told them that they needed their decision on what to do immediately. After a heated debate which lasted seven hours, the council decided to use the complex's power to try to contact the ship.

"And if they don't respond, we charge the weapons and try to blast them out of the sky."

Suddenly, all the televisions, radios, and viewscreens on the planet had an alien on them, broadcasting. It told them that they were here on Earth to conquer the human race.

Weiss, Cipra and a team of technicians were walking through the maze of computers when the complex was shaken by a huge explosion. A technician rushed up to them and almost yelled, "Sir, the craft just fired and hit about a mile away! We think they zeroed in on where our radio signals were coming from."

"Ready all weapon systems. How long til we're ready to fire?"

The man pulled out a small comp-readout, pushed some buttons, and said, "Seven hours, if we want full power. "

Weiss turned to an intercom. "Mary, hook me up to a complex-wide intercom."

"Go ahead."

"Attention. This is Professor Weiss. We were just attacked by the alien craft. Ready all systems for firing."

Seven hours later they fired. The ship also fired, deflecting the bolt. There was no damage.

Five hours later, the craft landed. They walked out onto the ground above the complex. They were seven feet tall and tri-pedaled. They had three arms, if you could call them that, with hands like crab's claws, and they had no faces. Just eyes. And more eyes. And more eyes. Then, incredibly, they fell apart!

"Aw, shit!" someone yelled. "Damn! Get those people from wardrobe out here. I wish someone could make something that works around here. Everyone take five. Perhaps we can finish the scene by tonight."



TRIVIA ANSWERS

STAR WARS

1. 20 years old
2. At least 30
3. .5 past lightspeed
4. He imitated the cry of a krayt dragon
5. Twin ion engine
6. TK-421 (movie) THX-1138 (book)
7. General Tagge (book) Admiral Motti (movie)
8. Dantooine
9. 17,000; 2,000 down, 15,000 on arrival
10. Blue ring (movie) Green beam (book)
11. Dia Nogu
12. 326-3827 (movie) 366117891 (book)

2001

1. The Earth rise on the moon
2. Tycho Magnetic Anomaly 1
3. Exposure to direct sunlight
4. 9000
5. Douglas Raines
6. Discovery 1
7. SS IV
8. Two
9. Two
10. Pan American

Star Trek (The TV series)

1. Red
2. Methuselah, Da Vinci, Shakespeare, Taranublus of Centares VII, Reginald Pollock, Sten Marcus II, Brahms, Solomon, Alexander, Lazarus, Merlin, Abramson
3. Surak
4. The Prime Directive
5. Joanna McCoy
6. A card game invented in the episode "A Piece of the Action"
7. "Let That be Your Last Battlefield"
8. Life
9. "For the World is Hollow and I have Touched the Sky"
10. An Ion storm caused a transporter malfunction
11. Kirk, McCoy, Scott, and Uhura



DEBRIEF

Now that you've read it, let us know what you think. I do mean us; unless you say otherwise, all comments will be passed on to the appropriate author or artist. Feedback is valuable; we're all trying to improve, and we need your help. But please, tell us why you like or dislike something. My address is at the bottom of the page.

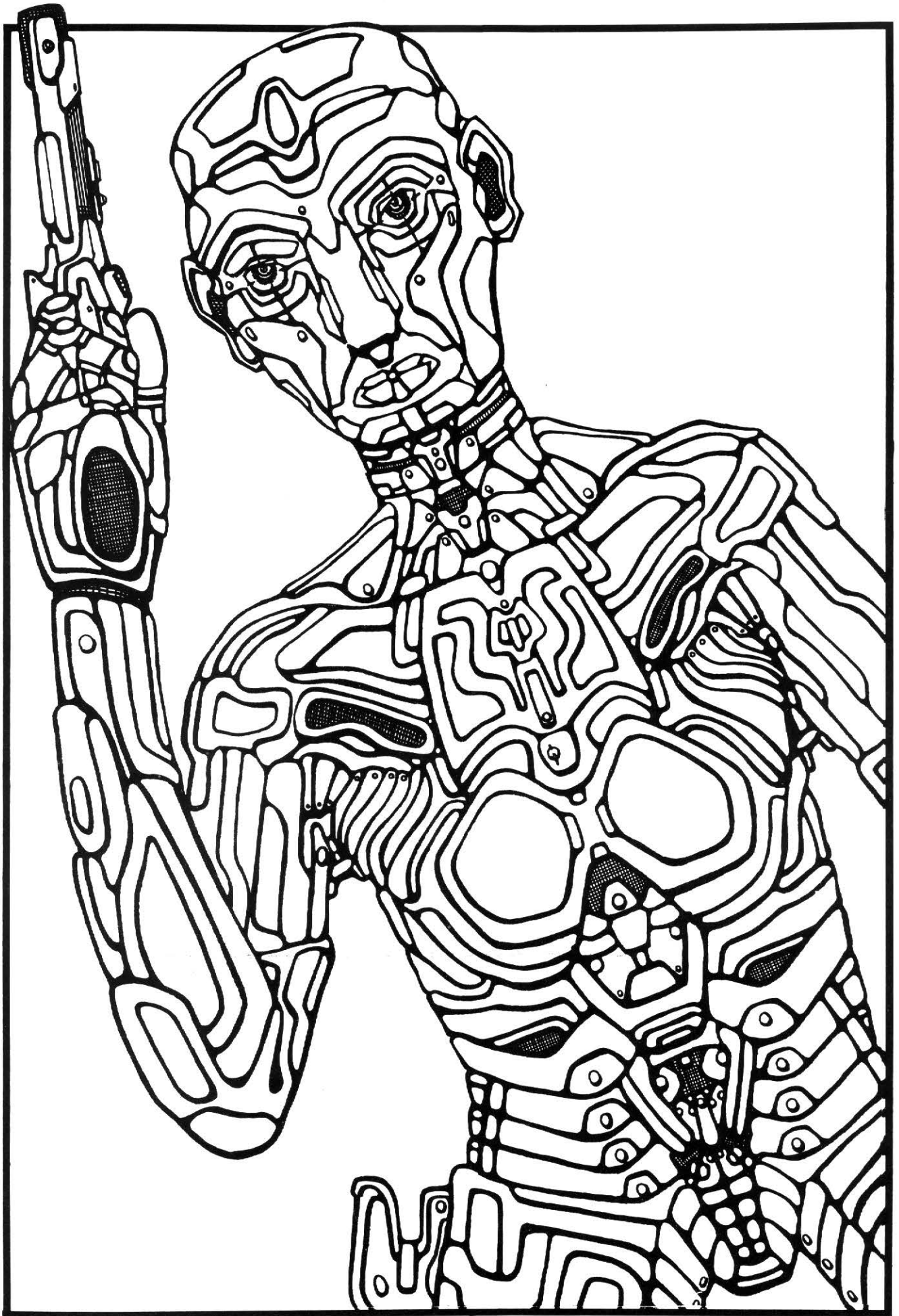
On to issue 2. Contents are still a bit tentative right now, since we are going to 30% reduction and I'm not sure yet about the page count. The second part of A Matter of Honor will be there, of course, and a truly horrendous pun story that showed up at one meeting and nobody would admit to. Not being a fingerprint expert, I wasn't able to attribute it. There was this one small pawprint, though...

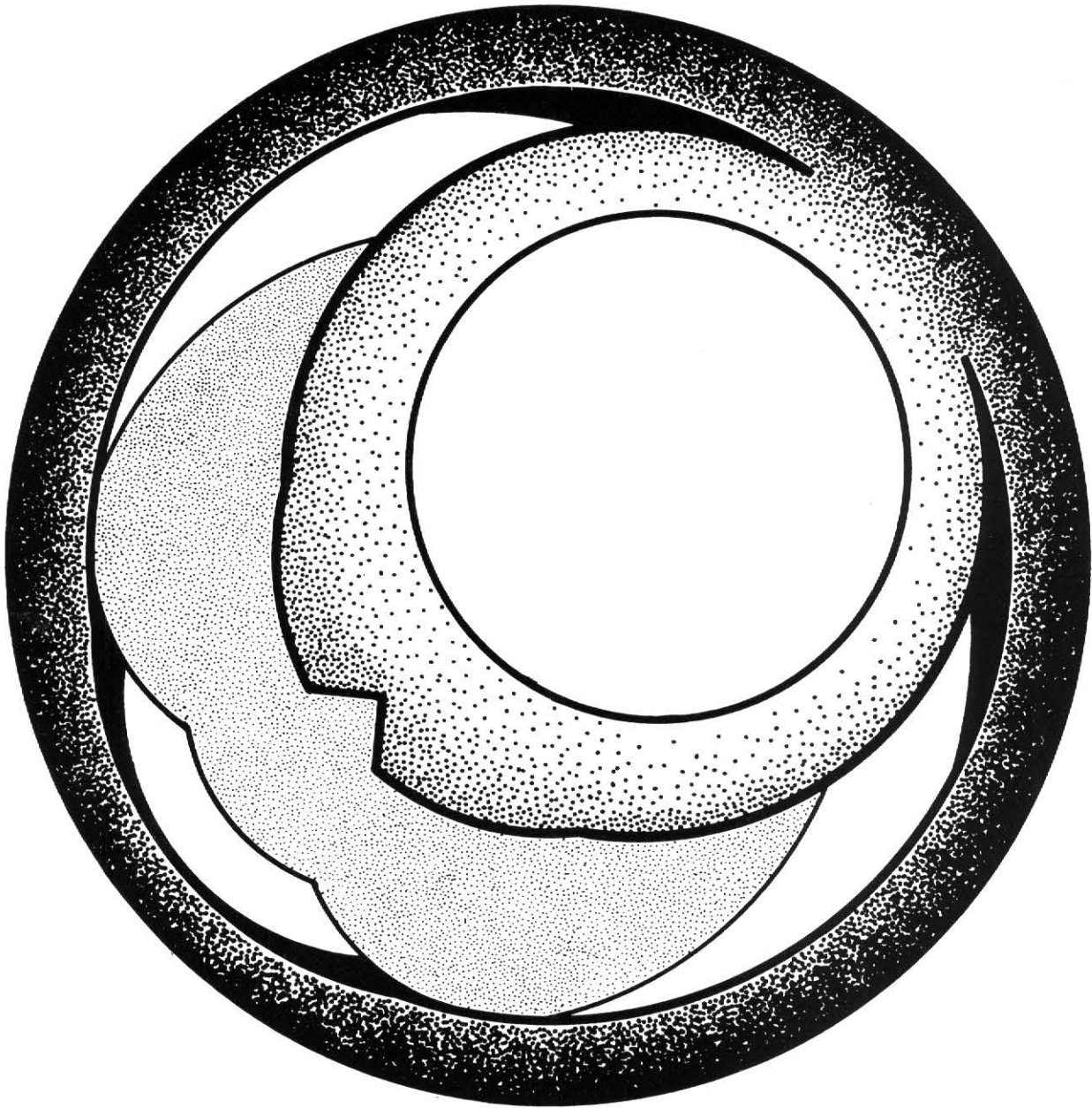
Besides that, I hope to have all of the following. Dee Gurnett's "The Survivor", a very different end-of-the-world story; Pat Spath's "A God Goes Killing", which I can't describe without spoiling it for you, and a short-short by Stephen Jaspar, as yet untitled. I also hope to have Steve Gallacci do an illustrated article on how he does his excellent drawings (personal note: he does Corina Losinj exactly as I visualized her. Maybe better.)

So. My address for your comments and hopefully contributions, then so long until #2. And may you never beat a Wookie at chess.

Ann Wilson
Box 3215 608 MAS
APO NEW YORK 09009







PUBLISHERS MESSAGE:

WITH RAUMSCHIFF'S PUBLICATION A DREAM HAS BEEN FULFILLED. SEVERAL PEOPLE HAVE WORKED DILIGENTLY TO SEE THAT THIS MAGAZINE REACH COMPLETION. I WISH TO THANK THEM NOW.

FIRST, ANN WILSON, MY EDITOR WHOM I HAVE GREAT FAITH , AND HOPE MOST OF YOU WILL AGREE ALSO IN MY OPINION. SO PLEASE WRITE TO HER AND TELL HER WHAT YOU LIKE AND DISLIKE ABOUT RAUMSCHIFF.

SECOND, I WISH TO EXPRESS MY SINCERE THANKS TO STEVE GALLACCI FOR HIS DETERMINATION TO SEE THAT THIS PROJECT COMPLETED (WITH A LAST MINUTE CRUSH FOR PASTEUP WHICH HE DESERVES SPECIAL RECOGNITION) I HOPE YOU THE READER ENJOY HIS DRAWINGS AND THE FICTION OF RAUMSCHIFF.

THANK YOU, AND PLEASE WRITE

THE PUBLISHER